

How to make the Tea Partiers even madder

By [Steve Thorngate](#)

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My wife and I used to live in DC. If we still did, we'd be tempted to join the estimated 150,000 at the Jon Stewart-Stephen Colbert [event](#) on the National Mall tomorrow.

Timothy Noah is [not enthused](#) about the nebulous hybrid of a [Glenn Beck](#) parody and an actual political rally:

There's still a lot we don't fully understand about the Tea Partiers and the political independents who have lost faith in Obama. But one thing we should all be pretty clear on by now is that they *hate, hate, hate* anything that smacks of elitism. The spectacle of affluent 18-to-34-year-olds blanketing the Mall to snicker at jokes about wingnut ignoramuses and Bible thumpers will, I fear, have the effect of a red cape waved before a bull.

Gabriel Arana [disagrees](#):

Who cares if the Stewart/Colbert rallies make the Tea Partiers mad? They've been mad since early 2009.... With Republican obstructionism in the Senate and the impending takeover of the House by the party of "no," it's safe to say that,

come Nov. 2, the government won't be getting much of anything done.

You can choose to cry about it, but I'd rather laugh.

I share Arana's sense of helpless frustration with the Tea Party's success, Republican obstructionism and the [apparent inevitability](#) of divided-government gridlock. Still, I think Noah's right here.

[As I've said before](#), I appreciate Stewart and Colbert's willingness to unapologetically work within the strange space created by the shattered boundaries between entertainment, news and politics--a situation that long precedes them. But the Tea Party has managed to corral a bunch of America's worst impulses under a banner (however incoherent) of regular folks fighting back against uncaring elites. It's also succeeded in pushing the Republican Party right without destroying its chances of retaking Congress.

Three days before the election, a high-profile smart-alecky Tea Party mockery-fest seems like a horrible idea. Stewart and Colbert may prove that they are comedians, not opinion journalists or liberal activists--a point that Stewart in particular is forever [trying to drive home](#). But to do so by giving a big electoral gift to the very people they think are so ridiculous is an awfully high price.

In other Tea Party-vs.-elites news, this [quiz](#)--based on Charles Murray's *Washington Post* [piece](#)--has been making the rounds (via CCblogger [Marvin Lindsay](#)). Twenty-five yes/no questions determine your relative elitism. I answered just nine of them elitely; apparently I'm a man (somewhat) of the people. (I confess, however, that while I know that "MMA" stands for "mixed martial arts," my first thought was "Metropolitan Museum of Art.")