



FRIENDS OF THE MIDDLE NEWSLETTER #236 — SEPT. 28, 2012

Welcome to always lively political discussion and whatever else comes up.
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With a Little Hate from My Friends

(posted by MarthaH, Sept. 28, 2012)

Duh! Search.

"Obama Hate Speech Spreads on Facebook" (w/video) by Leslie Meredith, TechNewsDaily

July 19, 2012, (<http://www.technewsdaily.com/4584-obama-hate-speech-spreads-on-facebook.html>)



(Old stereotypes rise again on Facebook.)

Racism is alive and well on Facebook, despite the social network's policy banning hate speech.

A new study from Baylor University shows how anti-Obama and just plain racist groups use Facebook to spread their messages. And we're not talking about politics, but Ku Klux Klan-style hate speech using old stereotypes updated with do-rags and golden grills.

"Some people have declared the present a "post-racial" era in that U.S. citizens elected a black president, maintaining that policies to address racism are no longer necessary," Mia Moody, Ph.D., who led the Baylor study, said in a statement. "But depictions of minorities in new media show otherwise."

More than 20 Facebook groups and "pages" were analyzed, using the keywords, "hate," "Barack Obama," and "Michelle Obama" to identify them.

Although historical stereotypes that portrayed blacks as animals, evil or shiftless have all but disappeared from mainstream television shows and movies, fans of Facebook hate groups have revived them and use doctored photos of the President as a chimp or sporting a bandana and a mouth full of gold teeth, according to the study.

"The growth of Facebook groups from a fringe activity to a significant communication source illustrates the recent evolution in the spread of hate speech," Moody said. Study findings indicate Facebook hate groups/pages differ from the hate groups of old. Today's groups don't have to be a part of a traditional faction such as the Ku Klux Klan — Anyone can create a Facebook group or page anywhere, and then recruit members from all over the world, the study said.

Moody found that even groups that claimed to be politically motivated used racist rhetoric, contained racist posts and comments. The page for the group, "No! I don't hate blacks! I just think Barack Obama is a terrible president," was peppered with racial slurs, such as "Obama needs to step down and go back to Africa with the rest of the coons!! He's nothing but a jigaboo and spear chucker!! (sic)." This site was later removed from Facebook.

Some hate groups have avoided Facebook policy-keepers by using slur-free titles for their groups and "official" pages, along with photos without captions — neither of these examples would turn up in a Facebook keyword search. "Because slurs are not in the official title, Facebook is not as quick to shut them down," she said.

Many groups emphasized the Obamas' dietary habits, the report said. One photo featured Mr. Obama holding a can of Welch's grape soda and wearing heavy gold jewelry and a baseball cap — obviously Photoshopped into the photo. The photo's caption asked, "Where all the white wimmin at (sic)?"

Facebook prohibits hate speech that "attacks people based on their actual or perceived race, ethnicity, national origin, religion, sex, gender, sexual orientation, disability or disease." However, it allows "clear attempts at humor or satire that might otherwise be considered a possible threat or attack. This includes content that many people may find to be in bad taste (e.g. jokes, stand-up comedy, popular song lyrics, etc.)." Facebook did not respond to our request for comment, leaving us to wonder, "Are racial slurs ever funny?"

FotM NEWSLETTER #236 (Sept. 28, 2012)—HYPERTEXT INDEX

<u>DATE-ID</u>	<u>TIME</u>	<u>FROM</u>	<u>SUBJECT/TITLE</u>
<u>20120928-00</u>		MarthaH	With a Little Hate from My Friends by MarthaH ("Obama Hate Speech Spreads on Facebook")
<u>20120927-01</u>	08:36	SteveB	"Necomimi: A Reporter Tames Mind-Controlled Cat Ears" (w/ video)
<u>20120927-02</u>	12:38	Ben	Yesterday's Lunch at Apple
<u>20120927-03</u>	14:22	Ben	Today's Lunch at Apple
<u>20120927-04</u>	23:59	SteveB	Photo: Cats with Real Cat Ears



"Necomimi: A Reporter Tames Mind-Controlled Cat Ears" (w/ video) by Betsy Isaacson, Huffington Post

Sept. 22, 2012, (http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/09/17/necomimi-mind-controlled-cat-ears_n_1891129.html?ref=topbar)

Before I put on the cat ears, NeuroSky publicist Kendall Hurley tells me a story. Wearing the cat ears at a product launch party in LA, she was embarrassed to find that the ears perked up whenever an attractive journalist came over to her. NeuroSky Vice President David Westendorf comments that the ears could be used in a "hot or not" scenario, and muses on speed dating as a product use case. There's no one I'm attracted to at the office. For the first time, I'm relieved.

The "ears" I'm speaking of are NeuroSky's most popular product, a pair of plush-covered cat ears that perk up when you're feeling focused, droop at relaxation, and twitch and wiggle for certain other sensations. Called Necomimi (Japanese for "cat ears"), the ears are electroencephalography (EEG) devices, which basically means if they're put on your head they can figure out how you're feeling by reading the electrical signals produced by your brain. In other words, this is a toy that has the ability to read your mind, or at least figure out your feelings.

Despite what the Necomimi's shape may have you believe, putting on the \$99 ears is significantly harder than slipping on a headband. First there's a strap that has to go on the back of your head, then a clip that has to latch onto your ear (more tricky, but still possible, if you have earrings on), then a sensor shaped like a partially-consumed lollipop that swings down and presses against your forehead. Hair can deaden the sensor, so ailurophiles with bangs might want to brush them back beforehand. After that, press the power button and the cat ears start calibrating; in my case, this means that one ear perks up, one ear flops down, and after a minute or so, they start wiggling wildly. Apparently that means they're ready.

"I've never watched someone write before--this is great," Westendorf remarks as I type.

The ears are wiggling back and forth, which means I'm "in the zone" -- both focused and relaxed simultaneously. When I type, my ears wiggle; when I look up to ask questions, they perk, showing "focus." The robotic whirring noises made by the moving ears are surprisingly loud: Westendorf says that the prototype testers enjoyed the

noise, so it was "boosted" in the final product. I'm not sure if I like it or not: on the one hand, it's really distracting, on the other hand, I can always tell what my ears are doing. The latter is probably a good thing.

Wiggling ears are apparently also a good thing, and Hurley, Westendorf, and another publicist, Kaitlin Egan, are all pleased with mine. Apparently it's hard for some people to get "in the zone," and the fact that I can do it just by typing interview text is a cause for celebration. The hashtag for Necomimi, emblazoned on the back of the pink promotional t-shirts, is #MakeMyEarsWiggle: the elusive "zone" is a desired state.

Westendorf tells the story of when the company first realized the ears were working.

It involved a mercurial CEO, Westendorf says, and NeuroSky product manager Pedro Vecchi, who was wearing the ears for the first time.

"And every time the CEO got angry, Pedro's ears would spring up," Westendorf says. "And we were all like 'wow, it's actually working!'"

Still, there are some things you can't do with the ears: running, for instance, is "virtually impossible." Not only will the sensor jar, but electrical "noise" from your muscles will interfere with the readings. Still, as long as you skip jarring movement and strenuous activity, there's no reason not to continue wearing them: "we wear 'em all day at the office a lot," Westendorf says, prompting a discussion of various officemates' custom ears. Apparently, you can get used to the overhead robotic noises.

Westendorf is excited about bizarre-use cases. Apparently, one Green Bay Packers fan painted his face green and bought a Necomimi, only to remove the default white kitten ears and add wedges of cheese. He also talks about a poker culture that's started to develop, one where all players wear Necomimi and try to "bluff their thoughts" or risk giving away the state of their hand.

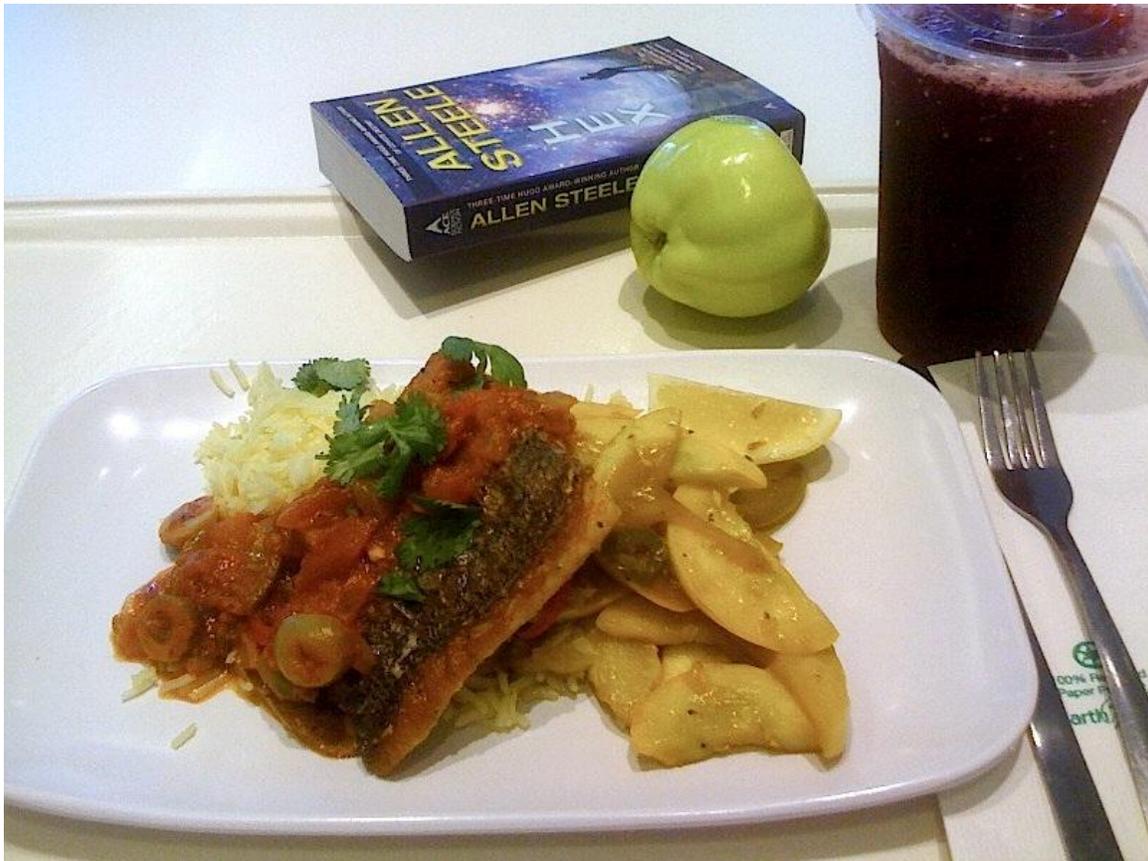
I'm no poker player or cheesehead, but for the rest of the day, I have the cat ears. As I type up the interview, I float in and out of the zone, and the robot noises become background drone. A lot of people from different departments at HuffPost find ways to come over to ask what I'm wearing. Fellow HuffPostTech-er and desk mate Britney Fitzgerald uses her cell phone to snap pictures of me, and tweets them from the HuffPostTech Twitter account; I get back at her by filming her wearing the ears a couple of days later.

Take a look at the clip. What do y'all think of this swanky new mind-reading device?

Video: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HjVix3xSr9k&feature=player_embedded.

I was a mess yesterday: an 8 AM ophthalmologist appointment found me back at work around 9:30 with hugely dilated pupils. I am not certain whether it's the medication used, or just the Inner Animal responding to irritating and distracting visual distortion, but either way, it leaves me feeling panicked.

But, characteristically, I managed to stick it out for lunch and a bit more, and the lunch was a fine reward: Chef Bladimir's delicious Striped Bass Vera Cruz:



I hugely enjoyed my Tempura Black Drum, which I took on the veranda, with my old buddy Al Fresco. I selected white sticky rice, in deference to my all-too-frequent kidney stones; I love it anyway. The delicious sesame sauce with the bland sweetness of white sticky rice was a great combination with the crunchy tempura drum and onion strips. The squash and broccoli were spot-on, of course, and so were the green beans. I suspect the green beans of having been Kentucky Wonder, by virtue of a characteristic rigid starchiness. They were, however, cooked just fine, and very fresh. (I am just not a Kentucky Wonder kind of guy: give me those haricot vertes, any time.)

Yummy meal. It's all very, very gone now!

Urp:



Tempura Black Drum with Sesame Sauce over White Rice with Veggies

<http://icanhas.cheezburger.com/>



—Friends of the Middle,
Steven W. Baker (SteveB), Editor/Moderator

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