

Who is Glenn Beck?



Glenn Lee Beck (born February 10, 1964) is an American [radio](#) and [television host](#), [conservative](#)^[4] [political commentator](#), [author](#), and [entrepreneur](#). He is the host of [The Glenn Beck Program](#), a [nationally syndicated talk-radio show](#) that airs throughout the [United States](#) on [Premiere Radio Networks](#); he is also the host of an [eponymous cable news show](#) on [Fox News Channel](#). As an author, Beck has had six [New York Times-bestselling books](#), with five debuting at #1.^[1] Beck is also the founder and CEO of Mercury Radio Arts, a multi-media [production company](#) through which he produces content for radio, television, publishing, the stage, and the Internet. Beck was born in [Everett, Washington](#), and raised as a [Roman Catholic](#). He obtained his first broadcast job as a disc-jockey for his hometown radio station at the age of 13 after winning a contest. When his mother died, Beck moved to [Bellingham](#), where he attended high school. After graduation, he worked at radio stations in [Provo, Utah](#), [Washington D.C.](#), and [New Haven, Connecticut](#). Along the way, Beck married and divorced his first wife. He also struggled with drug and alcohol abuse, and went through recovery in the mid 1990s. After marrying his second wife Tania in 1999, the couple converted to [Mormonism](#). Beck's array of media outlets have brought him wealth and popularity, along with recurring controversy and criticism. His supporters praise him as a [constitutional stalwart](#) defending traditional [American values](#) from [secular progressivism](#),^[5] while his critics contend he promotes [conspiracy theories](#) and employs incendiary rhetoric for ratings.^[6]

Viewpoints

Political beliefs

Beck has described himself as a conservative with [libertarian](#) leanings.^{[4][27]} Among his core values Beck lists personal responsibility, private charity, the [right to life](#), [freedom of religion](#), [limited government](#), and family as the cornerstone of society.^[28] Beck also believes in low [national debt](#), and has said "A conservative believes that debt creates unhealthy relationships. Everyone, from the government on down, should live within their means and strive for financial independence."^[29] Beck supports individual gun ownership rights and is against [gun control](#) legislation.^[30] Beck believes that there is a lack of evidence that human activity is the main cause of [global warming](#).^[31] He also says there is a legitimate case that global warming has, at least in part, been caused by mankind, and has tried to do his part by buying a home with a "green" design.^[32] He also views the [American Clean Energy and Security Act](#) as a form of

[wealth redistribution](#), and has promoted a petition rejecting the [Kyoto Protocol](#).^[33] In a 2010 interview in [Forbes](#), Beck said that his production company, Mercury Radio Arts, is not political, but is an entertainment company, saying, "I could give a flying crap about the political process."^[41] In a follow-up story, Beck said, while explaining why [Tyler Perry](#) is his hero, "[Perry] has the luxury of not doing the political stuff, which is really where I want to be as a company. I just happen to believe the Republic is on fire and it wouldn't be as effective if I had Pluto come out with a cartoon fire hose to put it out."^[34]

Religious beliefs

Beck and his wife joined [The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints](#) in October 1999. Spiritually, Beck has credited God for saving him from drug and alcohol abuse, professional obscurity and friendlessness.^[35] In 2006, Beck performed a short inspirational monologue in Salt Lake City, Utah,^[36] detailing how he was transformed by the "healing power of Jesus Christ," which was released as a CD two years later by the [publishing company owned by the Mormon Church](#).^[37]

"It is likely that Beck owes his brand of [Founding Father](#)-worship to Mormonism, where reverence for the founders and the United States Constitution as [divinely inspired](#) are often-declared elements of orthodox belief ... Many Mormons also believe that [Joseph Smith](#) prophesied in 1843 that the US Constitution would one day 'hang by a thread' and be saved by faithful Mormons." (See [White Horse Prophecy](#).)

— Joanna Brooks, religious scholar ^[38]

Religious scholar Joanna Brooks contends that Beck developed his "amalgamation of [anti-communism](#)" and "connect-the-dots conspiracy theorizing" only after his entree into the "deeply insular world of Mormon thought and culture."^[38] Brooks theorizes that Beck's calls to [fasting](#) and prayer are rooted in Mormon collective fasts to address spiritual challenges, while Beck's "overt sentimentality" and penchant for weeping represent the hallmark of a "distinctly Mormon mode of masculinity" where "appropriately-timed displays of tender emotion are displays of power" and spirituality.^[38] [Philip Barlow](#), the Arrington chair of [Mormon history and culture](#) at [Utah State University](#), has said that Beck's belief that the [U.S. Constitution](#) was an "inspired document," his calls for [limited government](#) and for not exiling God from the public sphere, "have considerable sympathy in Mormonism."^[39] Beck has acknowledged that the Mormon "doctrine is different" from traditional [Christianity](#), but said that this was what attracted him to it, stating that "for me some of the things in traditional doctrine just doesn't work."^[40] Aware however of the [theological](#) tensions, Beck announced to [Chris Wallace](#) on the August 29, 2010 edition of [Fox News Sunday](#): "Look, I'm Mormon, and most Christians don't recognize me as a Christian."^[41] Religion has been a central part of Beck's message, although primarily referenced in broad terms, and not specifically to his [Mormon](#) faith.^[39] At Beck's Restoring Honor rally in August 2010, Beck gave a speech whose faith-based forebodings Pete Peterson of [Pepperdine's Davenport Institute](#) fit into an American tradition of calls to personal renewal. Peterson wrote: "A Mormon surrounded onstage by priests, pastors, rabbis, and imams, Beck

[gave] one of the more ecumenical [jeremiads](#) in history. Qualifying that, 'this isn't about one church or one faith over another, it is about the eternal principles of God,' Beck can still say that even though the religious leaders 'don't agree on fundamentals ... what they do agree on is God is the answer.'"^[42]

Ideological influences

An author with ideological influence on Beck is [W. Cleon Skousen](#) (1913–2006), a prolific [conservative](#) political writer, American [Constitutionalist](#) and [faith-based](#) political theorist.^{[43][38]} As an [anti-communist](#) supporter of the [John Birch Society](#),^[44] and limited-government activist,^[45] Skousen, who was Mormon, wrote on a wide range of subjects: the [Six-Day War](#), [Mormon eschatology](#), [New World Order conspiracies](#), even [parenting](#).^[45] Skousen believed that American political, social, and economic elites were working with [Communists](#) to foist a [world government](#) on the United States.^[46] Beck praised Skousen's "words of wisdom" as "divinely inspired", referencing Skousen's [The Naked Communist](#)^[47] and especially [The 5,000 Year Leap](#) (originally published in 1981),^[45] which Beck said in 2007 had "changed his life".^[45] According to Skousen's nephew, [Mark Skousen](#), *Leap* reflects Skousen's "passion for the [United States Constitution](#)", which he "felt was inspired by God and the reason behind America's success as a nation."^[48] The book is touted by Beck as "required reading" to understand the current American political landscape and become a "September twelfth person".^[45] Beck authored a foreword for the 2008 edition of *Leap* and Beck's on-air recommendations in 2009 propelled the book to number one in the government category on [Amazon](#) for several months.^[45] In 2010, [Matthew Continetti](#) of the conservative [Weekly Standard](#) criticized Beck's conspiratorial bent, terming him "a Skousenite."^[46] Additionally, [Alexander Zaitchik](#), author of the 2010 critical book [Common Nonsense: Glenn Beck and the Triumph of Ignorance](#), which features an entire chapter on "The Ghost of Cleon Skousen",^[49] refers to Skousen as "Beck's favorite author and biggest influence", while noting that he authored four of the ten books on Beck's [9-12 Project](#) required-reading list.^[50] In his discussion of Beck and Skousen, Continetti also stated that one of Skousen's works "draws on [Carroll Quigley](#)'s *Tragedy and Hope* (1966), which argues that the history of the 20th century is the product of [secret societies](#) in conflict",^[46] noting that in Beck's novel [The Overton Window](#), which Beck describes as "faction" (fiction based on fact), one of his characters states "Carroll Quigley laid open the plan in *Tragedy and Hope*, the only hope to avoid the tragedy of war was to bind together the economies of the world to foster global stability and peace."^[46] [Princeton University historian Sean Wilentz](#) postulates that alongside Skousen, [Robert W. Welch, Jr.](#), founder of the [John Birch Society](#), is a key ideological foundation of Beck's worldview.^[51] According to Wilentz:

The popularity of Beck's broadcasts, has brought neo-Birchite ideas to an audience beyond any that [Welch](#) or [Skousen](#) might have dreamed of ... He (Beck) attacks all the familiar bogeymen: the [Federal Reserve System](#) (which he asserts is a private conglomerate, unaccountable to the public); the [Council on Foreign Relations](#) (born of a "progressive idea" to manipulate the media in order to "let the masses know what should be done"); and a historical procession of evildoers, including Skousen's old target [Colonel House](#) and Welch's old target [Woodrow Wilson](#). His sources on these matters, quite apart from Skousen's books, can be unreliable. (For example) on September 22nd, 2010, amid a diatribe about House, Beck cited a passage from

Secrets of the Federal Reserve, by [Eustace Mullins](#). The book, commissioned in 1948 by [Ezra Pound](#), is a startlingly [anti-Semitic](#) fantasy of how a [Jewish](#)-led conspiracy of all-powerful bankers established the Federal Reserve in service of their plot to dominate the world.^[51]

Other books that Beck regularly cites on his programs are [Amity Shlaes](#)'s [The Forgotten Man](#), [Jonah Goldberg](#)'s [Liberal Fascism](#), [Larry Schweikart](#) and [Michael Allen](#)'s [A Patriot's History of the United States](#), and Burt Folsom Jr.'s *New Deal or Raw Deal*.^[46] Beck has also urged his listeners to read [The Coming Insurrection](#), a book by a French [Marxist](#) group^[46] discussing what they see as the imminent collapse of capitalist culture.^[52] In addition, on June 4, 2010, Beck endorsed [Elizabeth Dilling](#)'s 1936 work *The Red Network: A Who's Who and Handbook of Radicalism for Patriots*, remarking "this is a book, *The Red Network*, this came in from 1936. People — [\(Joseph\) McCarthy](#) was absolutely right ... This is, who were the communists in America."^[53] Beck was criticized however by an array of people, including [Menachem Z. Rosensaft](#) and [Joe Conason](#), who noted that Dilling was a proud [anti-semite](#) and [Nazi](#) sympathizer.^{[54][55][56]}

Countering progressivism

"What's the difference between a communist or socialist and a progressive? Revolution or evolution? One requires a gun and the other eats away slowly."

—Glenn Beck, keynote address to the 2010 [Conservative Political Action Conference](#), February 20, 2010^{[46][57]}

During his 2010 keynote speech to [CPAC](#), Beck wrote the word "progressivism" on a chalkboard and declared, "This is the disease. This is the disease in America", adding "progressivism is the cancer in America and it is eating our Constitution!"^{[46][57]} According to Beck, the [progressive](#) ideas of men such as [John Dewey](#), [Herbert Croly](#), and [Walter Lippmann](#), influenced the Presidencies of [Theodore Roosevelt](#) and [Woodrow Wilson](#); eventually becoming the foundation for President [Franklin D. Roosevelt](#)'s [New Deal](#).^[46] Beck believes that such progressivism infects both main political parties and threatens to "destroy America as it was originally conceived."^[46] In Beck's book *Common Sense*, he argues that "progressivism has less to do with the parties and more to do with individuals who seek to redefine, reshape, and rebuild America into a country where individual liberties and personal property mean nothing if they conflict with the plans and goals of the State."^[46] A collection of [progressives](#) whom Beck has referred to as "Crime Inc", comprise what Beck contends is a clandestine conspiracy to take over and transform America.^{[58][59][60]} Some of these individuals include [Cass Sunstein](#), [Van Jones](#), [Andy Stern](#), [John Podesta](#), [Wade Rathke](#), [Joel Rogers](#) and [Francis Fox Piven](#).^{[58][61]} Other figures tied to Beck's "Crime Inc" accusation include [Al Gore](#), [Franklin Raines](#),^[62] [Maurice Strong](#), [George Soros](#),^[63] [John Holdren](#) and President [Barack Obama](#).^[59] According to Beck, these individuals already have or are surreptitiously working in unison with an array of organizations and corporations such as [Goldman Sachs](#), [Fannie Mae](#), [ACORN](#), [Apollo Alliance](#), [Tides Center](#), [Chicago Climate Exchange](#), [Generation Investment Management](#), [Enterprise](#)

[Community Partners](#), [Petrobras](#), [Center for American Progress](#), and the [SEIU](#); to fulfill their progressive agenda.^{[59][63]} In his quest to root out these "progressives", Beck has compared himself to Israeli [Nazi hunters](#), vowing on his radio show that "to the day I die I am going to be a progressive-hunter. I'm going to find these people that have done this to our country and expose them. I don't care if they're in nursing homes."^[21] [Historian Sean Wilentz](#) has denounced Beck's progressive-themed [conspiracy theories](#) and "gross historical inaccuracies", countering that Beck is merely echoing the decades-old "[right-wing extremism](#)" of the [John Birch Society](#).^[64] According to Wilentz, Beck's "version of history" places him in a long line of figures who have challenged mainstream political historians and presented an inaccurate opposing view as the truth, stating:

Glenn Beck is trying to give viewers a version of American history that is supposedly hidden. Supposedly, all we historians — left, right and center — have been doing for the past 100 years is to keep true American history from you. And that true American history is what Glenn Beck is teaching. It's a version of history that is beyond skewed. But of course, that's what Beck expects us to say. He lives in a kind of [Alice in Wonderland](#) world, where if people who actually know the history say what he's teaching is junk, he says, 'That's because you're trying to hide the truth.'^[64]

Conservative [David Frum](#), the former speechwriter for [President George W. Bush](#), has also spoken of Beck's propensity for [negationism](#), remarking that "Beck offers a story about the American past for people who are feeling right now very angry and alienated. It is different enough from the usual story in that he makes them feel like they've got access to secret knowledge."^[21] [Source](#)

