



Let your car do the talking for you

Amerikaner sind mitteilungsfreudig und sitzen täglich lange im Auto. Was liegt deshalb näher, als seine Meinung für alle sichtbar auf dem Auto spazierenzufahren? medium US plus

Americans love their bumper stickers. The slogans on them are a great way to tell the world just what's on people's minds. Some messages are light-hearted: "Ever stop to think, and then forget to start again?" or "Despite the cost of living, it's still popular." Others are a call to action: "Honk if you love Jesus!" And then there are those that clearly demonstrate the driver's bad attitude: "Watch out for the idiot behind me!" Still others mix humor with the driver's social commentary: "Ignore the environment; it will go away."

Political bumper stickers are popular in this election year. It seems to be an easy way to say what you believe in, while not actually having to talk to anyone about it. After all, in the United States, we learn at an early age that it's not polite to talk about religion or politics. I guess one could say that doing so is politically incorrect.

People do like to talk politics, though, as long as everyone has the same point of view — which is pretty much the case in Massachusetts, where I live. Here, in one of the most liberal states in the nation, bumper stickers for Democrat Barack Obama outnumber those for Republican John McCain by about 10,000 to zero.

My favorite sticker during this election season, though, is a reference to the date when the current president leaves office. It says simply, "January 20, 2009: the end of an error."

Although the original bumper stickers appeared in the early days of automobiles, the political kind first be-

came popular during the 1960 presidential campaign. With more and more cars on the road, it was a great way for candidates Richard Nixon and John F. Kennedy to get their names out in public for very little money.

Since then, bumper stickers of this kind have changed little in their design, appearing in red, white, and blue. Usually they just have the name of the candidate — or the candidate and his running mate — although a few have had catchy slogans, such as "All the Way with LBJ" for Lyndon Johnson (1964) and "Gimme Jimmy" for Jimmy Carter (1976).

Bumper stickers from past elections are worth a lot of money to collectors, and they can also provide interesting lessons in history. How many people know that the father of Mitt Romney, our ex-governor who ran for president earlier this year, was a candidate for president in 1968? Or that Teddy Kennedy, the prominent Massachusetts senator and brother of John F. Kennedy, was a candidate in 1980?

People often leave bumper stickers on their cars long after the election is over, no matter whether their candidate won or lost. It's hard to know whether it's because the stickers are so difficult to peel off, or because the car owners still want everyone to know where their loyalties lie.

When our other senator — John Kerry — ran for president against George W. Bush in 2004, a lot of people had his stickers on their cars. They kept them on long after the election; and to really drive their point home (pun intended), some of them added a sticker that said: "Don't blame me! I voted for Kerry."

Interestingly, you don't see any Bush stickers from 2004 these days. Could it be that some things are just too embarrassing to admit? ●



"My favorite sticker this election year is 'January 20, 2009: the end of an error'"

bumper sticker ['bʌmpər ,stɪkər]	Autoaufkleber
(bumper)	Stoßstange)
catchy ['kætʃi]	eingängig
drive one's point home [,draɪv wʌnz ,pɔɪnt 'həʊm]	seinen Standpunkt klarmachen
embarrassing [ɪm'bærəsɪŋ]	peinlich
error ['erər]	Fehler (klingt wie: era ['ɪrə] (Ära))
gimme = give me ['gɪmi]	gib mir
guess [ges]	annehmen
honk [hɔːŋk]	hupen
light-hearted [,laɪt 'hɑːrtəd]	unbeschwert, fröhlich
outnumber sth. [,aʊt'nʌmbər]	etw. zahlenmäßig übertreffen
peel sth. off [,piːl 'ɔːf]	etw. abziehen
pun [pʌn]	Wortspiel
reference ['refərəns]	Anspielung
running mate ['rʌnɪŋ ,meɪt] US	Bewerber(in) um die Vizepräsidentschaft