



FRIENDS OF THE MIDDLE NEWSLETTER #130 — MAY 3, 2012

Welcome to always lively political discussion and whatever else comes up.
<http://www.FriendsOfTheMiddle.org> FriendsOfTheMiddle@hotmail.com

[Index to Friends of the Middle Newsletter #130 — May 3, 2012](#)

Electric Cars: The Best of Both Worlds?

(posted by Steven W. Baker / SteveB, May 3, 2012)



I know there are others. Tesla is doing some cool stuff. I hope they make it! Otherwise, Europe mainly leads. But this is a pretty one...and fast...from Spain, no less. Please pass me my lithium, Chinaman.

"AEDC Electric Prototype Has Range of 150 Miles, Expected to Achieve 170 MPH" by Paul Ridden, gizmag

May 1, 2012, (http://www.gizmag.com/aedc-electric-drift-car/22368/?utm_source=Gizmag+Subscribers&utm_campaign=42ea8516da-UA-2235360-4&utm_medium=email)

Spain's green racing pioneers Quimera Responsible Racing and the UK's Alex Letteriello and his small team at Evelio Electric Supercars have joined forces to develop an all-electric supercar designed to race in drifting competitions, where cornering is undertaken with a thrilling sideways slide. The quite simply stunning AEDC (All Electric Drift Car), or K1 Evelio to use its given name, is capable of quietly speeding from zero to 60 mph (96.5 km/h) in just 3.2 seconds, has an average range of 150 miles (241.4 km) per charge and is expected to reach speeds of 170 mph (273.5 km/h).

It's the stuff of just about every Hollywood blockbuster car chase and a popular sport in its own right, and now the jaw-dropping oversteering technique known as drifting is about to get a whole lot cleaner thanks to the development of a 100 percent electric Drift Car. As with electric drag racing, the powerful torque of the car's electric drive is perhaps a more important factor to drift competitions than range and may even help deliver the kind of howling tire action demanded by fans of the sport.

As you may have already spotted, the design of the K1 has been heavily influenced by the Slovakian K-1 Attack Roadster sports car, but with a 170kW electric powertrain (which can be scaled up to 250kW) developing 220Nm of torque instead of a roaring V6 engine. It's currently limited to a top speed of 95 mph (153 km/h), which is rather sluggish when compared to the Tesla Roadster, for instance, but its designers are looking towards ramping that up to the 170 mph mark in the future.

The super-charged Lithium Iron Phosphate batteries are said to have been specifically chosen for speed of recharge, and superior thermal and chemical stability. They can be charged to full capacity in just an hour, or 80 percent in 20 minutes via a 30 amp socket.

The vehicle has a tubular steel chassis and fiberglass body and sports a sleek silver white metallic pearl paint job at the moment, but Quimera is running a design competition that asks folks to come up with a suitably eye-catching race design to adorn the bodywork of the electric supercar.

FotM NEWSLETTER #130 (May 3, 2012)—HYPERTEXT INDEX

DATE-ID	TIME	FROM	SUBJECT/TITLE
20120503-00		SteveB	Electric Cars: The Best of Both Worlds? by Steven W. Baker / SteveB ("AEDC Electric Prototype Has Range of 150 Miles, Expected to Achieve 170 MPH")
20120502-01	06:20	MarthaH	"Fact Check: New Front in the 'War on Women'"
20120502-04	09:28	Pam	Re: "Fact Check: New Front in the 'War on Women'" (reply to MarthaH, above)
20120502-02	09:02	Pam	Re: Common Sense or Political Correctness? (reply to SteveG, May 1, 2012)
20120502-03	09:23	Pam	Re: "'Inside Edition' Investigates Congressional Cars" (reply to SteveG, May 1, 2012)
20120502-05	13:28	SteveB	"Reboot the R0mney-Bot"
20120502-06	18:32	Dennis	"Why Is the Conservative Brain More Fearful?" — The Alternate Reality Right-Wingers Inhabit Is Terrifying
20120502-08	18:48	SteveG	Re: "Why Is the Conservative Brain More Fearful?" (reply to Dennis, above)
20120502-07	18:46	SteveG	"Water Guns Banned, Handguns Allowed at GOP Convention"
20120502-09	20:05	SteveB	Re: "Water Guns Banned, Handguns Allowed at GOP Convention" (reply to SteveG, above)
20120502-10	20:08	SteveB	Fw: Urgent — Massive attack on Avaaz! Cyber War vs. People Power
20120502-11	23:08	SteveM	Fw: R0mney Saves Manager's Daughter's Life
20120502-12	23:35	SteveB	Re: R0mney 'Saves' Manager's Daughter's Life & "Mitt's Runaway Tale" (reply to SteveM, above)
20120502-13	23:58	SteveG	Quote: Mark Twain on Religion
20120502-14	23:59	SteveB	Photo: Chilean Turquoise Puya (puya berteroniana)

20120502-01	06:20	MarthaH	"Fact Check: New Front in the 'War on Women'"
-----------------------------	-------	---------	---

"Fact Check: New Front in the 'War on Women'" by Eugene Kiely, [FactCheck.org/USA Today](http://www.usatoday.com/news/politics/story/2012-05-01/fact-check-gillespie-obama/54669912/1)

May 1, 2012, (<http://www.usatoday.com/news/politics/story/2012-05-01/fact-check-gillespie-obama/54669912/1>)

Mitt Romney's senior adviser Ed Gillespie distorted some economic facts on Meet the Press when he accused President Obama of creating a U.S. economy that is "hostile" to women. Mitt Romney recently appointed Ed Gillespie to serve as a senior adviser.

- Gillespie said the "number of single-mother families living in poverty" is now the highest "in recorded history." But poverty statistics date only to 1959, and the poverty rate for single mothers — which is a better indicator than the total number— is still relatively low, despite a recent rise. It was 31.6% in 2010, the 37th highest rate in 52 years. The highest rate was 42.9% in 1962.
- He also said there has been a 14% increase in the number of single mothers living in poverty under Obama, relying again on the number rather than the poverty rate. The rate has increased 2.9 percentage points under Obama. By comparison, the rate rose 3.3 percentage points under Bush.
- Gillespie said "there are 2.7 million more women without health insurance today than when Barack Obama took office." True, but there are also 2.1 million more women living in the U.S. The percentage of uninsured women rose from 13.3% in 2008 to 14.8% in 2010. That's lower than the percentage of uninsured men, which was 17.9% in 2010.

Romney, the presumptive Republican presidential nominee, recently appointed Gillespie to serve as a senior adviser. Gillespie is a former chairman of the Republican National Committee and once served as an adviser to then-

President George W. Bush. Gillespie and Karl Rove, another Bush adviser, helped launch American Crossroads and Crossroads GPS, two political groups that aim to raise \$240 million to help Republicans this fall.

It was Romney who first attacked the president's economic policies as a "war on women," citing specifically the fact that 92% of the jobs lost under Obama were lost by women. As we wrote once before, that's a statement of fact — but not the whole story. That's the case, again, with Gillespie — who on Meet the Press on April 29 trotted out other economic facts that he says prove "the U.S. economy is a hostile workplace for women under President Obama."

Single mothers in poverty

Gillespie, April 29: We have actually now the highest number of single mother families living in poverty than at any time in recorded history. A 14% increase since President Obama took office. ... And we have, like I say, single mother families at the highest level in poverty.

First of all, "recorded history" — which sounds like a long time — goes back only to the Eisenhower presidency. The Census Bureau says it began providing official poverty estimates in 1959.

Second, Gillespie is right that the "number of single mother families living in poverty" in 2010, the most recent number available, is the highest since records have been kept, beginning in 1959. There were an estimated 4.7 million single mothers living in poverty in 2010. But that's misleading because it does not take into account population growth. A better measure would be the poverty rate — the percentage of single mothers living in poverty.

Since 1959, the poverty rates for single mothers have ranged from a high of 42.9% in 1962 to a low of 25.4% in 2000. The rate was 31.6% in 2010 — which is the 37th highest rate in 52 years.

Gillespie again relies on the number of single mothers in poverty rather than the rate of poverty, when he says that there has been "a 14% increase since President Obama took office." The rate has climbed from 28.7% in 2008 (Bush's last year in office) to 31.6% in 2010, an increase of 2.9 percentage points. By comparison, during the eight years under Bush - Gillespie's former boss — the rate rose from a record low of 25.4% in 2000 to 28.7% in 2008, a rise of 3.3 percentage points.

We don't mean to dismiss the fact that poverty among this group is high. But the fact is that the progress that had been made in the late 1990s was reversed in the last decade during two recessions under two presidents — one of each party.

Women and health insurance

In his interview with Meet the Press host David Gregory, Gillespie also cited the growing number of women who are without health insurance — once again without any perspective.

Gillespie, April 29: Actually, David, when you look at the facts there are 2.7 million more women without health insurance today than when Barack Obama took office.

That is true, as far as it goes. It's true that Census figures show that there were about 2.65 million more women without health insurance in 2010 compared with 2008. But there are also nearly 2.1 million more women in the U.S. compared with 2008.

When you consider population growth, the percentage of women without health insurance rose from 13.3% in 2008 to 14.8% in 2010 - which is still lower than the percentage of men who lack insurance. The percentage of uninsured males rose from 16.5% to 17.9%.

So the rates have risen by nearly identical amounts — by 1.5 percentage points for women and 1.4 percentage points for men — and women are still far more likely to have health insurance than men.

Of course, the federal health care law signed by the president in 2010 is designed to reduce the number of uninsured Americans. The Congressional Budget Office estimates that 32 million nonelderly Americans would gain health insurance because of the law by 2019 — if it is not repealed, as proposed by Romney.

'Hostile workplace?'

Gillespie uses the health insurance and poverty statistics — along with the unemployment statistics used previously by Romney — to support his claim that "the U.S. economy is a hostile workplace for women under President Obama." Gillespie also said the White House itself was a hostile workplace for women under the president, citing the remarks of former Communications Director Anita Dunn— who later told the Washington Post that her comments were taken out of context.

Dunn made her remark in a taped interview with journalist Ron Suskind for his book "Confidence Men: Wall Street, Washington, and the Education of a President."

Washington Post, Sept. 20, 2011: One of the most striking quotes in the book came from former White House communications director Anita Dunn, who was quoted as saying that, "this place would be in court for a hostile workplace. .??. Because it actually fit all of the classic legal requirements for a genuinely hostile workplace to women."

Dunn says she was quoted out of context and told The Post on Friday that she told Suskind "point blank" that the White House was not a hostile work environment.

Suskind allowed the Post to listen to his interview with Dunn, who is quoted in full as saying: "I remember once I told Valerie that, I said if it weren't for the president, this place would be in court for a hostile workplace. Because it actually fit all of the classic legal requirements for a genuinely hostile workplace to women."

Dunn — who is now a managing director of SKDKnickerbocker, a strategic communications firm in Washington, D.C.— remains a supporter of the president and frequently appears on Sunday talk shows speaking in support of his policies.

We won't try to settle a dispute between Dunn and Suskind, and we cannot say that the full context of her remarks — including the phrase "if it weren't for the president" — changes the meaning, as some liberal commentators have claimed. Read literally, the "if it weren't for the president" phrase only modifies the statement that the White House would be sued, not the subsequent sentence saying that the White House "actually fit all of the classic legal requirements for a genuinely hostile workplace to women."

But what we can say is that Gillespie — as Romney did before him — is not telling the full story when portraying the economic plight of women under the president.

20120502-04	09:28	Pam	Re: "Fact Check: New Front in the 'War on Women'" (reply to MarthaH, above)
-----------------------------	-------	-----	---

I'm afraid we're in for a lot more of this kind of thing.

20120502-02	09:02	Pam	Re: Common Sense or Political Correctness? (reply to SteveG, May 1, 2012)
-----------------------------	-------	-----	---

I think you're right about all the tracking, except for libraries. The American Library Assn. pitched a giant fit when the government tried to force libraries to turn over their records. Libraries started shredding them everyday and refused to comply. The govt. backed off.

20120502-03	09:23	Pam	Re: "Inside Edition' Investigates Congressional Cars" (reply to SteveG, May 1, 2012)
-----------------------------	-------	-----	--

Corruption wherever you look. These guys are no better than crooks. I don't begrudge them having a decent car, but they might set a better example.

20120502-05	13:28	SteveB	"Reboot the R0mney-Bot"
-----------------------------	-------	--------	-------------------------

I found this hilarious! I think the author is on to something, probably has inside information from Fox or Rush.

The billionaires got together and built a robot to replace R0mney shortly after his loss to McCain in 2008. It's been a learning/programming experience ever since.

The thing is, it's 2012. You'd think, with all that money, they could have made something a little more life-like, a little more human...

(See article below—Fw: R0mney Saves Manager's Daughter's Life—for further proof Romney is a cyborg of some kind. He's "wired" not "born of woman".)

"Reboot the Romney-Bot" by Gary Kamiya, Salon

May 2, 2012, (http://www.salon.com/2012/05/02/reboot_the_romney_bot/)

(Since clinching the nomination, the candidate's behavior has become even less recognizably human.)

Even before the Republican primaries began, rumors abounded that Mitt Romney was a robot. His zombie-like cheerfulness, his excessively regular features and his strangely perfect-looking family led to widespread suspicion that he had been assembled in Silicon Valley by a team of right-wing nanotechnologists and engineers and shipped secretly to GOP headquarters. The suspicions were far from universal, however. An influential group of skeptics rejoined that cybernetics had not advanced to the point where it could create lifelike humanoids, even ones as unconvincing as Romney, and that the GOP candidate should be considered a human being until it was definitively proven that he was a cyborg.

There the debate rested. Then Romney hit the campaign trail, and the pendulum swung decisively toward those who held that he was constructed out of high-impact plastic. Even the skeptics admitted that Romney's "personality" did not appear to be of organic origin. He seemed uncomfortable in his own skin (which of course would make sense if he did not have actual skin), and did not know how to tell jokes (humor is notoriously difficult to program). Even the words he used to describe himself sounded like they were auto-imported from a slightly archaic database, as when he oddly described himself as "severely conservative."

But the clearest sign that Romney had fiber optic cable coiled in his midriff was the bizarrely smug and clumsy way in which he constantly referred to his plutocratic lifestyle. When asked at the Daytona 500 whether he followed NASCAR closely, Romney completely failed to take advantage of this traditional GOP opportunity to demonstrate the common touch. He replied, "Not as closely as some of the most ardent fans, but I have some great friends who are NASCAR team owners." Two weeks later, in an interview about the NFL, Romney again went out of his way to affirm his membership in a tiny fraternity of disliked multimillionaires, saying, "I've got a lot of good friends – the owner of the Miami Dolphins and the New York Jets – both owners are friends of mine."

The subject of money, in particular, seemed to produce continual script errors, including inappropriate answers, dead-end loops and other rudimentary programming flaws. In Detroit, Romney boasted that his wife "drives a couple of Cadillacs" – the political equivalent of showing up for a photo op at a diner wearing an ascot and a monocle. He casually challenged Rick Perry to a \$10,000 bet during a debate, an unforced error that evoked vote-losing images of Fortune 500 CEOs snapping towels at each other in the sauna. But that weird glitch was dwarfed by a statement Romney made a month later. His hard drive apparently malfunctioning after his tax returns were

revealed, Romney referred to the \$370,000 he had earned giving speeches one year — an amount it would take the average American worker 14 years to make — as “not very much.” In short, Romney came across not only as an obscenely rich person, but as an obscenely rich person from another planet.

At this point, some leading technology analysts had begun to openly accuse whoever programmed Romney of gross incompetence. But others defended the unknown scriptwriter, pointing out that the Republican Party’s worship of plutocrats as emblems of “aspirational” capitalism made it impossible to for even the best programmer to write a coherent GOP script about wealth.

Romney’s performance in the primary debates also provided strong empirical support for the Mitt-is-a-cyborg thesis. For the entity claiming to be “Mitt Romney” that appeared onstage bore no resemblance to the Romney-like entity Americans had come to know in previous years. The moderate, conciliatory governor of Massachusetts was gone, his place taken by a strange, harsh figure who appeared to have been programmed by a disciple of Torquemada. Romney Version One had strongly supported a healthcare plan identical to Obama’s; Romney Version Two denounced “Obamacare” as opening the door to socialism. Beta Romney, who had defended a woman’s right to choose, had been replaced by an updated model that, like a doll that speaks a few simple phrases when its bottom is squeezed, intoned “abortion is immoral” again and again.

Different observers had different explanations for this strange phenomenon. Some maintained that “Mitt Romney” had been originally programmed in the factory to flip-flop when politically necessary. Others held that the earlier version had been surreptitiously refurbished, or possibly completely replaced.

Since he clinched the GOP nomination, Romney’s behavior has become even less recognizably human. Following his mechanical move to the far right during the primary season, his even more mechanical attempt to move back to the center has made it appear increasingly likely that he was assembled by nano-machines. His victory speech in New Hampshire was a tape loop of Reagan-like platitudes about free enterprise and Reagan-like blasts at the apocalyptic evil posed by Big Government, topped off with a weird, casuistic attempt to claim that his laissez-faire, I’ve-got-mine-Jack ideology was “fairer” than Obama’s attempt to shrink the increasing gap between rich and poor. Instead of the Great Communicator, Romney came off like a Frankenstein monster, cobbled together out of various right-wing bits and pieces, trying simultaneously to appease Tea Party extremists and clank back to the middle, all while smiling a big, artificially-whitened smile.

His inability to impersonate a human being poses severe political problems for Romney. But the worst is yet to come. Republican strategists are now advising Romney to stop attacking Obama and offer a “positive vision.” Most experts believe this simply cannot be done. Romney’s CPU, set up to defend cutthroat capitalism, destroy his opponents, and present the innocuous centrist Barack Obama as the reincarnation of V.I. Lenin, cannot accommodate the impossible demand that he suddenly become “human.” No one knows whether he will literally melt down in public with smoke pouring out of his eye sockets, or will simply begin regurgitating meaningless phrases about an “opportunity society,” like the unplugged super-computer HAL in *2001: A Space Odyssey*. But sooner or later, Romney is doomed to a fatal system error.

Like Arnold Schwarzenegger in *The Terminator*, Romney is about to be turned into scrap metal. But there is still time for him to save his campaign. **If Mitt Romney wants to be president, he must appear before the American people on prime-time TV and admit that he is a robot.**

With this one bold stroke, Romney would dispel all questions about his authenticity. After all, unlike human beings, robots are not expected to demonstrate consistency in their beliefs and actions. They do not have “selves,” only circuits that react in programmed ways to new situations. The instant Romney shows the nation the power cable hidden in his posterior, his self-contradictory positions and blatant pandering will cease to be seen as a cynical grab for power. Instead, they will become the visible manifestations of an advanced Google-like algorithm, inspiring technological interest and respect.

A frank confession that Romney plugs himself into a socket in his garage every night would also end the criticism of his wooden demeanor. *Star Wars*, *Mystery Science 3000*, *The Terminator* and other pop-culture hits have popularized lovable, wisecracking, helpful robots. Romney would be far better served if he was seen as C3PO, rather than a stilted, fake-Tea-Party plutocrat boasting about his friendships with other plutocrats.

Moreover, by forthrightly admitting that his head swivels around on a titanium base, Romney would instantly wipe out Obama's advantage among young voters. Tech-savvy young Americans prefer Facebook, Tumblr, Zynga, smartphones and iPods to reality anyway, and would jump at the chance to make their generational mark by electing a president who is one of them (and can be easily disassembled and shipped back to the factory for repair.)

Finally, if Romney were to stand before the American people, remove his head and forthrightly admit that he is a robot, he would get rid of the biggest albatross around his nonexistent neck: his leadership of the private equity firm Bain Capital. As a human being, Romney cannot justify the rapacious, job-destroying actions engaged in by Bain. When critics – including his GOP rivals – rightfully accused him of practicing “vulture capitalism,” all Romney could say was “In the free economy, in the private sector, sometimes investments don't work and you're not successful.” Coming from a human, this answer is heartless. Coming from a robot, it feels almost cuddly.

Which points to the real reason Romney should admit to being a robot – whether he is one or not. As a human being, Mitt Romney is a flop. But as a robot, he's positively human.

20120502-06	18:32	Dennis	“Why Is the Conservative Brain More Fearful?” — The Alternate Reality Right-Wingers Inhabit Is Terrifying
-----------------------------	-------	--------	---

[“Why Is the Conservative Brain More Fearful?” by Joshua Holland, AlterNet](#)

May 2, 2012, (<http://www.alternet.org/story/155210/>)

(The alternate reality right-wingers inhabit is terrifying.)

Consider for a moment just how terrifying it must be to live life as a true believer on the right. Reality is scary enough, but the alternative reality inhabited by people who watch Glenn Beck, listen to Rush Limbaugh, or think Michele Bachmann isn't a joke must be nothing less than horrifying.

Research suggests that conservatives are, on average, more susceptible to fear than those who identify themselves as liberals. Looking at MRIs of a large sample of young adults last year, researchers at University College London discovered that “greater conservatism was associated with increased volume of the right amygdala” (\$\$). The amygdala is an ancient brain structure that's activated during states of fear and anxiety. (The researchers also found that “greater liberalism was associated with increased gray matter volume in the anterior cingulate cortex” – a region in the brain that is believed to help people manage complexity.)

That has implications for our political world. In a recent interview, Chris Mooney, author of *The Republican Brain*, explained, “The amygdala plays the same role in every species that has an amygdala. It basically takes over to save your life. It does other things too, but in a situation of threat, you cease to process information rationally and you're moving automatically to protect yourself.”

The finding also fits with other data. Mooney discusses studies conducted at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln in which self-identified liberals and conservatives were shown images – apolitical images – that were intended to elicit different emotions. Writing at *Huffington Post*, Mooney explains that “there were images that caused fear and disgust -- a spider crawling on a person's face, maggots in an open wound -- but also images that made you feel happy: a smiling child, a bunny rabbit.” The researchers noted two differences between the groups. The researchers studied their subjects' reactions by tracking their eye movements and monitoring their “skin conductivity” – a measure of one's autonomic nervous system's reaction to stimuli.

Conservatives showed much stronger skin responses to negative images, compared with the positive ones. Liberals showed the opposite. And when the scientists turned to studying eye gaze or “attentional” patterns, they found that conservatives looked much more quickly at negative or threatening images, and [then] spent more time fixating on them.

Mooney concludes that this “new research suggests [that] conservatism is largely a defensive ideology -- and therefore, much more appealing to people who go through life sensitive and highly attuned to aversive or threatening aspects of their environments.”

But those cognitive biases are only part of the story of how a political movement in the wealthiest, most secure nation in the world have come to view their surroundings with such dread. The other half of the equation is a conservative media establishment that feeds members of the movement an almost endless stream of truly terrifying scenarios.

The phenomenon of media “siloiing” is pretty well understood – in an era when dozens of media sources are a click away, people have a tendency to consume more of those that conform to their respective worldviews. But there is some evidence that this phenomenon is more pronounced on the right – conservative intellectuals have had a long-running debate about the significance of “epistemic closure” within their movement.

So conservatives appear to be more likely to be hard-wired to be highly sensitive to perceived threats, and their chosen media offers them plenty. But that's not the whole story because of one additional factor. Since 9/11, and especially since the election of President Barack Obama, one of the most significant trends in America's political discourse is the “mainstreaming” of what were previously considered to be fringe views on the right. Theories that were once relegated to the militia movement can now be heard on the lips of elected officials and television personalities like Glenn Beck.

Consider, then, what it must be like to be a true-blue Rush Limbaugh fan, or someone who thinks Michele Bachmann is a serious lawmaker with a grasp of the issues – put yourself into that person's shoes for a moment, and consider what a nightmarish landscape the world around them must represent:

The White House has been usurped by a Kenyan socialist named Barry Soetero, who hatched an elaborate plot to pass himself off as a citizen of the United States – a plot the media refuse to even investigate. This president doesn't just claim the right to assassinate suspected terrorists who are beyond the reach of law enforcement – he may be planning on rounding up his ideological opponents and putting them into concentration camps if he is reelected. He may have murdered a blogger who was critical of his administration, but authorities refuse to investigate. At the very least, he is plotting on disarming the American public after the election, in accordance with a secret deal cut with the UN and possibly with the assistance of foreign troops.

Again, these ideas are not relegated to the fringe of forwarded emails. Glenn Beck talked about FEMA camps on Fox News (he later debunked them, which only fueled charges of a media coverup); dozens of Republican elected officials have at least hinted that they are birthers, while an erstwhile front-runner for the GOP nomination has repeatedly claimed that Obama is not eligible to be president. The head of the NRA, and the GOP's presidential nominee have both claimed Obama is plotting to take Americans' guns.

In reality, Americans are safer and more secure today than at any point in human history. But inhabitants of the world of the hard-right are surrounded by danger – from mobs of thugs at home to a variety of powerful and deadly enemies abroad.

For the true believers, Latin American immigration isn't a phenomenon to be managed, but a grave existential threat. A plot to “take back” large swaths of the Southwest is a theory that has aired not only on obscure right-wing blogs, but on Fox and CNN. On CNN, Lou Dobbs claimed immigrants were spreading leprosy; Rick Perry, Rep. Louie Gohmert and other “mainstream” voices on the right (that is, people with platforms) agree that Hezbollah and Hamas “are using Mexico as a way to penetrate into the southern part of the United States,” possibly with the aid of “terror babies” carried in pregnant women's wombs.

In the real world, the rate of violent crime in the US is at the lowest point since 1968 – in fact, it is somewhat of a mystery that the violent crime rate has continued to decline even in the midst of the Great Recession. It's also true that 84 percent of white murder victims are killed by other whites. But if you read the Drudge Report, or check in at Fox, on any given day you will see extensive coverage of any incident in which a black person harms a white person. These fit in with the narrative – advanced by people like Glenn Beck and long-touted by Ron Paul – that we

stand on the brink of a race war, led by the New Black Panthers (just consider how frightening it would be if there were more than a dozen New Black Panthers, or if they did more than say stupid things). Marauding "flash-mobs" of black teens – a near-obsession at many conservative outlets these days -- are simply a harbinger of things to come.

Continue, for a moment, to stroll in the shoes of a true believer on the right. Imagine how frightening it would be to believe Frank Gaffney, a former Assistant Secretary of Defense in the Reagan administration and leading neoconservative voice, when he claims the Muslim Brotherhood has infiltrated the highest levels of the US government, or Newt Gingrich, when he says that "sharia law" (there isn't such a thing in the way conservatives portray it – as a discrete canon of laws) poses a grave threat to our way of life.

Imagine believing that the Democrats' business-friendly insurance reforms included panels of bureaucrats who would decide when to let you die, as Sarah Palin infamously suggested. Or that virtually the entire field of climatology is perpetrating a "hoax," as senator James Inhofe claims, in order to undermine capitalism and impose a one-world government. Imagine seeing energy-efficient lightbulbs as part of an international plot to, again, undermine capitalism, as Michele Bachmann believes. Imagine thinking that the public school system "indoctrinates" young children into the "gay lifestyle," as influential members of the religious right – Pat Dobson, Bryan Fischer, Anita Bryant – have claimed for years. Imagine believing our electoral system is tarnished by massive voter fraud or that union thugs are running amok or that the Department of Homeland Security is making a list of people who advocate for "limited government." Imagine if there really were a War on Christmas!

These dark narratives come in addition to more run-of-the-mill fearmongering about the Iranian "threat," or nonsense about how "entitlements" are leading our economy to look like Greece's. Those of us in the "reality-based community" may look at these specters haunting the right with exasperation or amusement, but just consider for a moment how bleak the world looks to those who buy into these ideas.

Perhaps the most frightening part of all of this for the true believers is that even though these things aren't just fringe ideas circulating in forwarded emails – they're discussed by influential politicians and on leading cable news outlets – the bulk of the media and most elected officials refuse to investigate what's happening to this country.

That one ideological camp is so consumed with fear also has a lot to do with why conservatives and liberals share so little common ground. Progressives tend to greet these narratives with facts and reason, but as Chris Mooney notes, when your amygdala is activated, it takes over and utterly dominates the brain structures dedicated to reason. Then the "fight-or-flight" response takes precedence over critical thinking.

(Joshua Holland is an editor and senior writer at AlterNet. He is the author of *The 15 Biggest Lies About the Economy: And Everything else the Right Doesn't Want You to Know About Taxes, Jobs and Corporate America*. Drop him an email or follow him on Twitter.)

© 2012 Independent Media Institute

20120502-08	18:48	SteveG	Re: "Why Is the Conservative Brain More Fearful?" (reply to Dennis, above)
-----------------------------	-------	--------	--

Good article.

20120502-07	18:46	SteveG	"Water Guns Banned, Handguns Allowed at GOP Convention"
-----------------------------	-------	--------	---

Does this make sense?

"Water Guns Banned, Handguns Allowed at GOP Convention" by Amy Bingham, ABC News

May 2, 2012, (<http://abcnews.go.com/blogs/politics/2012/05/water-guns-banned-handguns-allowed-at-gop-convention/>)

In the politically-charged and likely protest-filled streets of Tampa, Fla., during the Republican National Convention in August, water guns will be strictly prohibited. Concealed handguns, on the other hand, will be perfectly legal.

Florida Gov. Rick Scott said this week that banning handguns from downtown Tampa during the convention, as the city's Mayor Bob Buckhorn requested, "would surely violate the Second Amendment."

"It is unclear how disarming law-abiding citizens would better protect them from the dangers and threats posed by those who would flout the law," Scott said in a letter to Buckhorn Tuesday, emphasizing the words "law-abiding." "It is at just such times that the constitutional right of self defense is most precious and must be protected from government overreach."

Buckhorn said today that he was "disappointed" by Scott's decision, but that the city will "plan and train accordingly."

Tampa officials are expecting thousands of protesters to descend on the Florida metropolis for the GOP convention. While no handguns will be allowed inside the convention, which is being protected by the Secret Service, concealed carry license-holders will be able to carry their weapons in the streets surrounding the convention.

They will not, however, be able to have "super soaker" water guns, sticks, poles, portable shields or glass bottles.

Buckhorn said last month that the state law, which prohibits the city from temporarily banning handguns, makes the city "look silly" because officials can prohibit water guns but not real ones, The Associated Press reported.

"There is no reason to have a concealed firearm in downtown Tampa that week," Buckhorn said in Wednesday's statement. "And, to be clear, I am far less concerned with those who have concealed weapons permits than the ones who may somehow acquire a weapon and use it to create mayhem."

James Davis, a spokesman for the Republican National Convention, said party officials are not worried that concealed handguns will create security problems.

"We think we are going to have a safe and successful convention," Davis said. "The local police and Secret Service will make sure of that."

The city plans to have 4,000 law enforcement personnel in the downtown area during the party convention, a move Buckhorn said would create "safe environment" where "a firearm should not be necessary for self-defense."

The Republican National Convention will be held at the Tampa Bay Times Arena, Aug. 27-30.

20120502-09	20:05	SteveB	Re: "Water Guns Banned, Handguns Allowed at GOP Convention" (reply to SteveG, above)
-----------------------------	-------	--------	--

I think this headline should read, "outside" the Convention, not "at" the convention. And, for some dumb reason that proves Republicans don't really believe in the right to carry guns, all guns are banned from the convention floor itself? If guns are no problem, why not allow them inside? If the guns are OK for the people in the streets, why not convention goers?

I swear this Rick Scott is making Florida more like Texas every day. Idiots!

20120502-10	20:08	SteveB	Fw: Urgent — Massive attack on Avaaz! Cyber War vs. People Power
-----------------------------	-------	--------	--

from Avaaz:

Right now, the Avaaz website is under massive attack. An expert is telling us that an attack this large is likely coming from a government or large corporation, with massive, simultaneous and sophisticated assaults from across the world to take down our site.

We were expecting this. Our people-powered campaigning has been fearless, and we've taken on the world's worst actors head-on, in ways that genuinely hurt them - from the Syrian and Chinese regimes to Rupert Murdoch, Big Oil and organized crime. The Syrian dictatorship called our campaigner 'the most dangerous man in the world', and a UK inquiry recently revealed emails between Murdoch's news corporation and top levels of government saying the Avaaz campaign against Murdoch was their biggest concern. Sometimes I lie awake at night wondering when these people are going to come after us.

And it's begun. We have urgent campaigns on oceans, forests and Syria we need to run, but the attack has been going on for 36 hours straight, threatening our ability to keep campaigning. Because of top-notch security, our site is still up, but it's not enough. We need to show these actors that when they attack Avaaz, they're messing with people. And people-power can't be intimidated or silenced, it only grows stronger. Click below to donate to an Avaaz defence fund to take our security to the next level, and show our attackers that whatever they throw at us only makes us stronger:

https://secure.avaaz.org/en/massive_attack_on_avaaz_a/?vl.

National authorities have been alerted to the attack. But we urgently need the defence fund to help us:

- Rapidly build industrial-scale security so that no attack can stop us campaigning.
- Hire top hackers and technologists to manage our systems, defend us and test our defences.
- Increase the physical security of our most vulnerable staff in places like Lebanon and Russia.
- Take a range of other actions to improve our technology and security.

Avaaz is a lightning rod that channels voices from across the world, from incredibly brave Tibetan, Russian and Syrian demonstrators risking everything for their freedom, to Bolivian indigenous communities saving their forest from being chopped in half. These people face intense danger, and repelling this attack is just another front in their and our struggle for democracy.

Millions of us have campaigned to keep corporations and governments from censoring and controlling the web. Now one of them is trying to censor us. So far, we're still standing, and our amazing member-funded systems mean that we can run this appeal for support safely and securely. But our campaigning is under real threat. We need to act, and show that these tactics only make us stronger.

Avaaz can stand up to governments and corporations only because all of our strength, legitimacy, and funding comes from people, and people alone. We don't accept money - any money - from governments, corporations, foundations, or even large individual donors. It's extremely rare among large civil society organizations today, but 100% of our money comes from small online donations, and we don't accept gifts over 5000 Euros from anyone. That's why we're independent, and that's why we're a threat to those who put power before people. Let's keep being a threat.

With hope and determination, Ricken and the whole Avaaz team.

20120502-11	23:08	SteveM	Fw: R0mney Saves Manager's Daughter's Life
-------------	-------	--------	--

[Source of original email unknown, but it's mostly accurate. -SteveB]

NOW EVERY ONE KNOWS OBAMA WOULDNDN'T DO THE SAME THING

<http://www.snopes.com/politics/romney/search.asp>

Whether you like Romney or not, this story is very revealing. Sometimes, this facet of Romney's personality isn't so subtle.

In July, 1996, the 14-year-old daughter of Robert Gay, a partner at Bain Capital, had disappeared. She had attended a rave party in New York City and gotten high on ecstasy. Three days later, her distraught father had no idea where she was, and Romney took immediate action.

He closed down the entire firm and asked all 30 partners and employees to fly to New York to help find Gay's daughter. Romney set up a command center at the LaGuardia Marriott and hired a private detective firm to assist with the search. He established a toll-free number for tips, coordinating the effort with the NYPD, and went through his Rolodex and called everyone Bain did business with in New York, and asked them to help find his friend's missing daughter.

Romney's accountants at Price Waterhouse Cooper put up posters on street poles, while cashiers at a pharmacy owned by Bain put fliers in the bag of every shopper.

Romney and the other Bain employees scoured every part of New York and talked with everyone they could... prostitutes, drug addicts, anyone.

That day, their hunt made the evening news, which featured photos of the girl and the Bain employees searching for her. As a result, a teenage boy phoned in, asked if there was a reward, and then hung up abruptly. The NYPD traced the call to a home in New Jersey, where they found the girl in the basement, shivering and experiencing withdrawal symptoms from a massive ecstasy dose. Doctors later said the girl might not have survived another day. Romney's former partner credits Mitt Romney with saving his daughter's life, saying, "It was the most amazing thing, and I'll never forget this to the day I die."

So, here's my epiphany: Mitt Romney simply can't help himself. He sees a problem, and his mind immediately sets to work solving it, sometimes consciously, and sometimes not-so-consciously. He doesn't do it for self-aggrandizement, or for personal gain. **He does it because that's just how he's wired.**

Many people are unaware of the fact that when Romney was asked by his old employer, Bill Bain, to come back to Bain & Company as CEO to rescue the firm from bankruptcy. Romney left Bain Capital to work at Bain & Company for an annual salary of one dollar. When Romney went to the rescue of the 2002 Salt Lake Olympics, he accepted no salary for three years, and wouldn't use an expense account. He also accepted no salary as Governor of Massachusetts.

Character counts! The media and Obama re-election machine will focus on Romney's wealth and the immorality of it, as they see it, but Romney is a man who uses his wealth to bless and to make this world a better place.?

Let's get this message out because it is not likely that the media will do so!

[20120502-12](#)

23:35

SteveB

Re: R0mney 'Saves' Manager's Daughter's Life & "Mitt's Runaway Tale"
(reply to SteveM, above)

I like this one, SteveM. This one makes sense to me and I'm glad to read it. The story has started to get stretched a little. The girl, apparently, was in no danger, so the part about saving her life is simply not true. There was no kidnapping. There were never any arrests. She was really running away and hiding out with friends in Montville Township, N.J.

Also, the way the article talks about R0mney being "wired" convinces me even more that the "man" is a robot. Actually, closing a business and flying everyone to NYC to look for a runaway girl sounds a lot like a robot invoking Asimov's Three Laws of Robotics. R0mney simply followed the "Prime Directive" to protect human life.

"He does it because that's just how he's wired."

But, still and all, it was a good thing that he did and, fortunately, it all ended well. In different circumstances, Romney's actions could have saved a life. Instead, I guess he just ended up wasting a lot of his company's money. Is that the way he's going to run the U.S. If one American is kidnapped in Iran or Russia or China, Mitt's going to drop everything and attack???

I wonder if Romney would do the same thing for people who aren't rich? And, once again, the Right always attacks "the media". ("Let's get this message out because it is not likely that the media will do so!") This is simply a lie, the story seems to be out there everywhere.

I'm sure President Obama has actually saved a bunch of people's lives, but I won't do into that now. He sure didn't save bin Laden's, did he?

"Mitt's Runaway Tale" by M.L. Nestel and Mara Gay Monday, The Daily

Apr. 16, 2012 (<http://www.thedaily.com/page/2012/04/16/041612-news-romney-missing-teen-gay-nestel-1-4>)

(Story of how Romney helped find teen has become exaggerated.)

A favorite story among Mitt Romney's backers for establishing his cred as both a good guy and a man of action concerns the time he helped find a business partner's missing teenage daughter.

The story is spellbinding and there's no debate that Romney's quick and resolute action helped locate the girl — but The Daily has learned that her life was never in danger, as many retellings have suggested.

The 14-year-old disappeared for several days after attending a rave in New York City and was reunited with her family after she was found staying with some new friends in northern New Jersey. But versions of the 1996 incident told by Romney's campaigns and news reports have often carried the implication that he saved the girl's life.

The Romney campaign declined to comment for this story.

Earlier this year, an ad called "Saved" featured the girl's father crediting Romney with helping "save" his daughter. And press coverage of the disappearance during Romney's run for Massachusetts governor a decade ago described the teen as near death.

But several acquaintances of the teen who knew her well at the time and have not spoken publicly before told The Daily a different story: one of a rebellious adolescent in a moment of high-spirited escapism who hid from her parents in relative safety in an upscale New Jersey town.

And they credited the group of new friends she made during her disappearance, including a boyfriend, as the ones who ultimately encouraged Melissa Gay — daughter of Romney's colleague at private equity firm Bain Capital — to head home to her panicked family.

"Did Mitt Romney 'save' this girl? No," said Doug Becker, the then-boyfriend and now a 32-year-old pastor in the same town of Rockaway, N.J. "But I do think what spurred her going home was the kind of coverage it was getting, and I think [Romney] was pretty responsible for that."

Romney was head of Boston-based Bain Capital in July 1996 when he received a frantic call from Robert Gay, a senior partner at the firm. Melissa was missing and had last been seen in New York City. Romney shut down operations at Bain and set up a command center at a New York Marriott to find the teenager.

More than 200 bankers from Boston and New York took to the streets, passing out fliers in some of New York's toughest neighborhoods. Days later, Melissa turned up safe at the home of Becker's parents in suburban New Jersey.

Since 2002, in the early years of Romney's entrance into public life, three of his campaigns — one gubernatorial and two presidential — have floated the story to demonstrate his crisis management skills and, more importantly, his human side. But each time the basic facts have become more blurred.

During his 2002 gubernatorial bid, for example, a Boston Globe profile of Romney described Melissa as near death, found in Montauk, N.Y., where she was "shivering through detox after a massive dose of ecstasy." Robert Gay had been told by doctors, according to the story, that his daughter "might not have lived another day."

Other more recent news stories have even claimed that Melissa was kidnapped. She wasn't.

The source of these details is unclear, but the spirit of these tellings — that Romney's know-how rescued a teen who was just hours away from death — has gone uncorrected and unchallenged.

In 2007, in Romney's first bid for the presidency, his campaign ran a TV ad by the name of "Searched." In the 30-second spot, sirens wail as newspaper clippings dissolve into ominous skyscraper images and Robert Gay tearfully speaks.

"Mitt's done a lot of things that are nearly impossible, but for me the most important thing he's ever done was to help save my daughter," Gay told prospective voters.

Earlier this year, the pro-Romney PAC "Restore Our Future" ran the spot again under the title "Saved."

Kate Flynn, a childhood friend of Melissa's, said Gay asked to come home on her own accord. She said the teenager paged the beeper of a hometown friend in Connecticut and asked for someone to come collect her.

"I saw the ad and that's not what happened," Flynn told The Daily. "Mitt Romney did help with the search. But from everything that Missy told us, she's the one who made the contact to call home."

Flynn said that while the ad was "exaggerated," Melissa's disappearance was legitimately terrifying. "We were all frantic," she said.

Another childhood friend, speaking anonymously, was more blunt. "I think the ad is incredibly misleading. Dishonest is the word for it," the friend said. "She wasn't saved, she ran away to go to a rave, and got lost and wound up in New Jersey. She paged a friend to come get her."

The childhood friend, who said she has not spoken to Gay in years, said the political ad has been the subject of derision among some graduates of their former high school in Danbury, Conn. "Many of us have put the ad up on our Facebook profiles to say, 'Seriously?' That's not how we remember it. Even the headline of 'Saved,' it's a bit much."

Of course, for Romney's business partner and his wife, the ordeal was the stuff of every parent's nightmare: Their young daughter was lost, alone somewhere after disappearing in New York City. The Gays feared the worst. One of the teens who took her to the rave told police he had given her several hits of ecstasy and last saw her partying under the Whitestone Bridge, according to news accounts from the time.

A close relative who asked not to be identified because Melissa Gay requested that the family not speak publicly about the story said Romney made the difference in bringing her home.

"Without Mitt's help, it wouldn't have happened," the family member told The Daily, adding that the incident was traumatic for the Gays, a family with seven children. "It was pretty scary at the time. All of us as teenagers have had our moments, but that one gave everyone the run for their money."

Gay's parents did not respond to requests for comment, though Lynette Gay spoke briefly to The Associated Press last month.

"That was a long time ago and she's gotten on with her life," she said.

Personal stories told in the political arena can often take on a kind of mythical air, said John Geer, an expert in campaign ads.

"The story becomes bigger than life," Geer said in a telephone interview from Nashville, Tenn., where he chairs the political science department at Vanderbilt University. "It can happen on both sides of the aisle."

Romney, according to Geer, will have to become more comfortable speaking about his personal life to connect with voters.

"The real issue is that Romney has this positive aspect to his personality that hasn't been talked about very much because of the way he appears on the trail," Geer said. "The public wants to know more about that, not that they necessarily want to have a beer with Romney, but they want a sense that he's a good person."

Melissa's story began on a Saturday night in July 1996, when the 14-year-old told her parents she was playing tennis at a country club near their home in affluent Ridgefield, Conn.

Instead, Melissa ditched the racquet to meet up with a group of older teens she knew. They headed to the big city to party and attend a rave called Fantasia II on New York's Randalls Island.

Becker said he and his group befriended the Connecticut stray, spent the week with her in Montville Township, N.J., and even helped line up a job for her at a telemarketing call center in nearby Pinebrook, N.J., just in case she wanted to stay. By all accounts, the teen won a large number of friends in Montville in a short time.

A few days later, Becker said he and friend Caroline Mok caught wind of the unusual search party looking for a missing teenage girl.

"We were eating at Subway, and we heard about it and Missy hadn't," Becker said. "Caroline was like, 'You tell her,' and Missy said, 'Tell me what?' and Caroline said, 'You're in the news.'"

Reality set in. "I kind of remember the look on Missy's face and it was almost like, 'This figures.' "

The teens decided Becker would drive Gay home the next morning. "I was elected as the one to do that," he said. "I was closest to her and we wanted to be together one last day."

But later that night, as Gay and 17-year-old Becker sneaked into an upstairs room at his parents' house in Towaco, N.J., to listen to music, the police arrived. A youth from the area had called a tip line inquiring about a reward, then quickly hung up; police had traced the call back to New Jersey.

Becker's mom was stunned as Doug admitted Melissa was there.

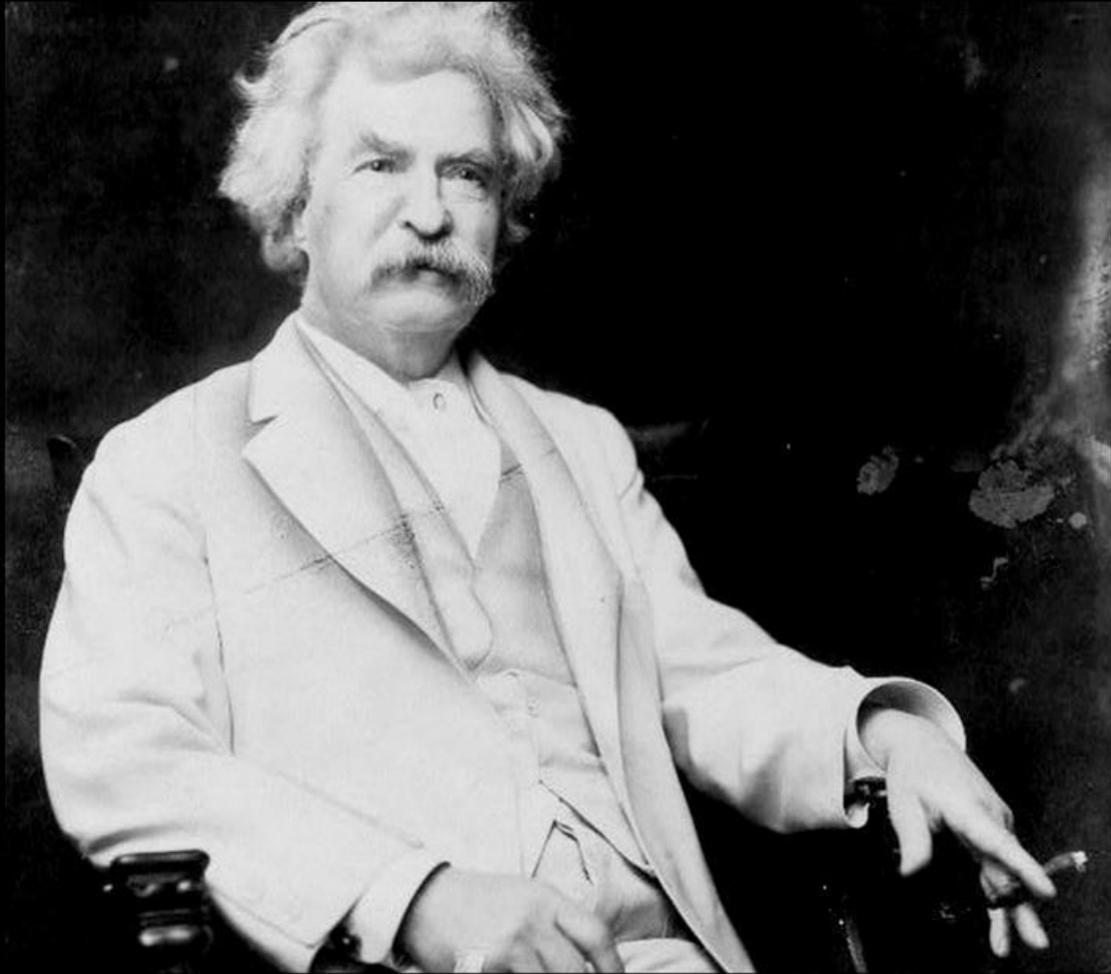
Gay's parents sent her away for a month to be reformed, Becker said. "She was sent to some kind of camp for troubled youth," he said.

Becker said he and Gay maintained a "fairly close relationship for at least a year," but eventually lost touch.

The Daily went to the home of Melissa Gay Lewis in Danbury, Conn., where she is a fourth-grade teacher and lives with her husband and young children just a couple miles from the Ridgefield house she once ran away from. She refused to comment.

In 2008, Lewis and her husband each donated \$2,300 to Romney's presidential run. So far, they haven't donated to Romney's second White House bid.

FREE YOUR MIND and THINK



**Religion was invented when
the first con-man met the first fool.**

~Mark Twain

<http://www.robsrareandgiantseeds.com/5-puya-berteroniana-flower-seeds-striking-1125/>



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

You can subscribe to this free, no-obligation, daily Newsletter filled with lively, intelligent discussion centered on politics and government, but ranging to anything members feel is important, interesting, or entertaining. To subscribe, use the form on our website or blog, or simply reply to this email with "Yes" or "Start" in the Subject line, then add our email address (below) to your Contacts or Safe list. To opt-out, reply with "No" or "Stop" in the subject line.

Welcome to all our new members who may be here for the first time. We want to hear from YOU! To submit your comment, you can use the form on our website or blog, or reply to this email with your two cents worth. Be sure to sign with your desired user name.

Your email address will always be kept strictly confidential.

Feel free to forward this Newsletter to anyone you know on the Right or the Left, though your motives might be different in each case. Regardless, PASS IT ON! Help keep your friends and acquaintances informed and thinking.

<http://www.FriendsOfTheMiddle.org>
FriendsOfTheMiddle@hotmail.com

original material ©2012 Steven W. Baker, all rights reserved