



FRIENDS OF THE MIDDLE NEWSLETTER #137 — MAY 14, 2012

Welcome to always lively political discussion and whatever else comes up.
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Where Lies the Truth?

(posted by Steven W. Baker / SteveB, May 14, 2012)

Here's an interesting piece that totally contradicts the article from *The Washington Post* we re-printed this past Friday (FoM Newsletter #136), which attacked a teenage Romney for forcibly cutting a gay fellow schoolboy's offensively long and piercingly blond hair. It sure would be interesting to get to the bottom of this. One hopes the liberal media are above the deceptions of the Right...but that can't always be the case, and, in this case, we shall surely see.

If the Obama campaign (and *The Washington Post*???) really have it together, this was just their little, weak teaser piece. Next, in Breitbart-style, they will roll-out some hellacious prep-school story that not only reinforces the impression that this dude is an out-of-touch, rich, bully elitist, but also an incredible—let us say—cad, that the American people will decide in droves that Mittens can never be allowed any nearer to the Presidency.

Yet...where lies the truth?

Well...I can tell you one thing. This story contains at least one paragraph that we already know is a pack of lies (thanks to SteveM, FotM Newsletter #130, May 3, 2012):

In 1996, the fourteen-year-old daughter of a Bain Capital partner was kidnapped. [My emphasis. —SteveB] When Mitt Romney learned of this, he *shut down the entire multi-million dollar firm* and flew the *entire staff* to New York, so they could help look for the girl. Romney hired private detectives, set up a toll-free tip line, coordinated with the NYPD, papered the streets with fliers, contacted every Bain customer in the city, and personally hit the bricks with the Bain crew to join the search. **They found her, just in the nick of time – she was dying from an overdose of drugs in a New Jersey basement.** She was only rescued because someone saw news coverage of Romney's search efforts.

The part in bold type is complete and utter fabrication—blatant lies almost two weeks old. Catch up, old codger, John Hayward!

You see, the Right keeps telling themselves the same old, tired lies, long after everyone else has acknowledged the truth. But separating truth from fiction about the rest of story will, apparently, take a bit more time.

"The Washington Post's Romney Hit Piece Comes Apart" by John Hayward, *Human Events*

May 11, 2012, (<http://www.humanevents.com/article.php?id=51441>)

(An astonishing journalistic train wreck.)

The Washington Post was already skating on thin ice with its fantastically convenient hit piece on Mitt Romney, published in perfect synchronization with President Obama's embrace of gay marriage. Designed to paint Romney as a mean-spirited homophobic bully during his prep school days – which, let us remember, occurred over seventeen thousand days ago – the ridiculously bloated and overly-dramatic 5000-word *Post* "expose" related the story of how Romney allegedly led a gang of high-school hooligans and forcibly cut the hair of a "presumably gay" fellow student named John Lauber.

The piece does a great deal of mind-reading to insinuate homophobia, and in an amazing set of concluding paragraphs, heavily implies that Romney essentially *murdered* this poor kid with his scissors – it just took his body four decades to collapse around his broken spirit. John Lauber died of liver cancer in 2004, an even the *Post* dramatically contrasts with Romney accepting the Distinguished Alumni award from the Cranbrook prep school, concluding with a melancholy salute to Lauber's hair, which he never stopped bleaching blond.

The *Post* based this hit on testimony from five men who "mostly lean Democratic," including one who was a volunteer for the 2008 Obama campaign. No one else seems able [to] remember the incident taking place.

Including, as it turns out, both a friend of Romney's that the *Post* **openly and fraudulently asserted** had "long been bothered" by the haircut hazing... and the "victim's" *own family*.

Romney friend Stu White dropped the first bombshell on the *Washington Post's* phony story, telling ABC News "he was not present for the prank, in which Romney is said to have forcefully cut a student's long hair, and was not aware of it until this year when he was contacted by the *Washington Post*." The assertion that he was "long bothered" by Romney's alleged display of full-contact barbering was entirely false, and there is no way to claim it was not a *deliberately false* impression inserted into the *Post* story, since they knew perfectly well that they are the ones who told White about it, just a few weeks ago.

Much worse for the *Post* was a statement released by John Lauber's sister Betsy, which reads, in full:

The family of John Lauber is releasing a statement saying the portrayal of John is factually incorrect and we are aggrieved that he would be used to further a political agenda. There will be no more comments from the family.

Wow. Just... wow. The *Post* apparently didn't bother clearing their smear job with the victim's family, even though they interviewed both Christine and Betsy Lauber for the piece. They thought they were contributing to a respectful tribute, not an ugly partisan hit.

Christine Lauber told ABC News that her brother never mentioned the allegedly life-destroying traumatic incident related by the *Washington Post*, and "probably wouldn't have said anything" even if something like it did happen, because he presumably was not the fragile character he has been portrayed as. Furthermore, she tearfully insisted that "if he were still alive today, he would be furious" over the *Post* story.

But wait! This gets worse. Someone at the *Post* apparently panicked after Stu White spilled the beans to ABC News, because they committed one of the greatest sins in journalism: they quietly edited the Romney hit piece without publishing a retraction, as Breitbart.com requested in writing. The false statement about Stu White has been changed to read as follows:

"I always enjoyed his pranks," said Stu White, a popular friend of Romney's who went on to a career as a public school teacher and said he has been "disturbed" by the Lauber incident **since hearing about it several weeks ago, before being contacted by *The Washington Post***. "But I was not the brunt of any of his pranks."

This was a colossally stupid move on the *Post's* part. How often do people have to be reminded that the Internet never forgets? That caches and screen grabs of dishonestly edited material rest comfortably in the hands of media watchdogs?

ABC mentions that some other, as yet nameless, classmates of Romney are eager to dish dirt on his teenage misbehavior, although no one seems ready to corroborate the Lauber hair hazing incident. That effort will misfire *badly*, and solidify support for Romney from a public sick unto death of attempts to distract from Barack Obama's record in office.

They're almost equally sick of journalistic double standards. They've been hearing for years that even the most reasonable inquiry into Obama's shadowy past – even simple requests for ordinary documentation – are completely out of bounds, and can only be motivated by racial animosity. But now they're supposed to sit still while a bunch of 60-year-olds are trotted out to reminisce about what a handful Mitt Romney was, during his school days in 1965? All because Obama hatchet man David Axelrod needs to spin a campaign narrative that plugs into the "gay marriage" and "bullying" crusade?

At this point, the most interesting "journalism" remaining to be done on the Teen Mitt haircut incident is determining whether Axelrod was directly involved in crafting the *Post* story. Does anyone want to leak some internal emails so we can get the ball rolling, and find out if there were direct, documentable ties to the Obama campaign? Or did the *Post* cook this up on their own, taking the initiative to offer journalistic support after being told the Obama gay marriage flip-flop was coming, with one eye fixed nervously on the President's cratering poll numbers? This is already the most spectacular case of journalistic malpractice since George Zimmerman became the world's pre-eminent "white Hispanic." Let's take this baby into the stratosphere and leave some chemtrails!

It's really interesting the way the *Washington Post* chose to end their article, by noting that Romney received an alumni award just a year after John Lauber's untimely death. You know what happened a year *before* Lauber lost his battle against liver cancer? A boat carrying a family of four, two friends, and the family's dog sprang a leak on Lake Winnepesaukee, dumping them into the dark waters of early evening, and leaving them to howl in terror as other boats zipped around them. Mitt Romney and two of his sons happened to be vacationing in the area. They jumped onto jet skis and raced to the rescue. Governor Romney was pulled off his jet ski at one point. They even saved the dog, a Scottish terrier.

A couple of years before that, Romney performed a similar rescue for a group of kayakers who were shoved onto hard rocks by fierce winds.

In 1996, the fourteen-year-old daughter of a Bain Capital partner was kidnapped. [My emphasis. — SteveB] When Mitt Romney learned of this, he *shut down the entire multi-million dollar firm* and flew the *entire staff* to New York, so they could help look for the girl. Romney hired private detectives, set up a toll-free tip line, coordinated with the NYPD, papered the streets with fliers, contacted every Bain customer in the city, and personally hit the bricks with the Bain crew to join the search. They found her, just in the nick of time – she was dying from an overdose of drugs in a New Jersey basement. She was only rescued because someone saw news coverage of Romney's search efforts.

[We know, now, these are lies, uncorrected here. —SteveB]

Thirty years earlier, Mitt Romney was a high school student who may, or may not, have been slightly more of a jerk than the average teenage boy. How's that for an "evolution?" Why on Earth would any reasonable person think his high school misadventures tell us more about his character than his deeds later in life?

Update: After enduring a day of pounding for their stealth edit, the *Post* added this editor's note to the bottom of the Romney piece: "An earlier version of this story reported that White 'has long been bothered' by the Lauber incident. White later clarified in a subsequent interview that he has been disturbed by the incident since he learned of it several weeks ago from a former classmate, before being contacted by *The Washington Post*."

Horsefeathers. White didn't "clarify" anything in a "subsequent interview." The *Post* author invented that false assertion out of thin air.

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20120511-01	10:10	Art	Re: "Mitt Romney's Prep School Classmates Recall Pranks..." (reply to SteveB, FotM Newsletter #136)
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I think what someone did 50 years ago does not necessarily reflect on what he/she may have become today. What does bother me is Romney's response that he doesn't remember the incident. Think back on your own HS days, you would have remembered something like that.

Can this man be trusted?

20120511-02	13:19	SteveG	Fw: One.org Action: Send a Message to the G8
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from One.org:

The eight most powerful leaders in the world are meeting for their yearly fireside retreat, the G8 Summit, at Camp David next week...and we need to work harder than ever to get them to hear us.

So we're taking our message to the street...literally.

We worked with some friends to create the 'Street Tweeter' - a tweet-fed robot that will take your message to the streets in the run-up to the G8 so our leaders can't ignore us. But we need your help to make it work.

Here's what to do:

1. Write a 40-character message (including spaces) in your own words to inspire and encourage G8 leaders to act now to break the cycle of hunger and poverty.
2. Tweet your message to @ONESTreetTweet (not on Twitter? You can submit your message in the form on this blog post here).
3. Please do it now!!
4. If your message gets printed then we'll snap a photo of it and tweet it back to you.

So get creative! Make your 40-character message personal, inspiring, attention-grabbing – whatever you want to say to the G8. I can't wait to see what you come up with.

<https://twitter.com/#!/onestreettweet>

Thanks for all you do, Malaka Gharib New Media Coordinator, ONE.org

P.S. Want to know more about how the Street Tweeter works? Check out the ONE Blog for more details right here:

<http://act.one.org/go/508?akid=3088.5789054.zVrIR&t=5>

20120511-03 16:40 SteveB "What the China Crisis (& His Gay Crisis) Revealed About Mitt"

"What the China Crisis (and His Gay Crisis) Revealed About Mitt" by Joe Conason, NationofChange

May 11, 2012, (<http://www.nationofchange.org/what-china-crisis-and-his-gay-crisis-revealed-about-mitt-1336744930>)

Just as aspiring judges ought to possess the quality known as "judicial temperament," a would-be president should have certain obvious attributes of mind and character. Two incidents tested Mitt Romney this week — and both times, his ambition overwhelmed his judgment.

On Thursday morning, as Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton conducted tense negotiations with the Chinese government over the fate of Chen Guangcheng, the blind dissident who had sought refuge in the U.S. embassy in Beijing, Romney seized on rumors of American capitulation to launch a political salvo: "If these reports are true, this is a dark day for freedom and it's a day of shame for the Obama administration," he said at a rally in Virginia. "We are a place of freedom here and around the world, and we should stand up and defend freedom wherever it is under attack."

Clearly, Romney had no knowledge or experience with which to judge the situation unfolding in Beijing, which concluded much differently than his harsh remarks suggested. In fact, both the Chinese and the Americans were seeking a face-saving solution that was achieved when New York University (whose president John Sexton happens to be a close friend of Secretary Clinton and is well-connected in Beijing, as well) offered a fellowship to Chen, which the government had agreed he could accept.

The result, of course, was that Romney looked either "foolish" or "very foolish," depending on whether the assessment came from Weekly Standard editor Bill Kristol or from Abby Huntsman Livingston, the daughter of former Republican presidential candidate Jon Huntsman, who lived in the Beijing embassy when her father served as U.S. ambassador to the People's Republic.

But Romney's error was worse than a misguided political tactic. It showed a woeful ignorance of diplomacy and a callow opportunism that don't befit the next occupant of the Oval Office. To endanger Chen's safety and the prestige of the United States in those difficult hours was an act of weak character as well as stupidity.

Earlier in the week, Romney revealed another potential weakness when he let religious right activists bully his campaign over its hiring of an openly gay foreign policy staffer, Richard Grenell. After the campaign froze him out of press briefings to quell the controversy, Grenell finally quit on Tuesday, with no effort by the presumptive nominee to persuade him to stay. If Grenell was qualified to hold the sensitive post of foreign policy spokesman, why did Romney cave instantly to demands from radio hosts and other ignorant bigots to let him go?

For many years, various ethnic, sexual and religious prejudices hobbled American intelligence and diplomacy — a national flaw for which the United States paid dearly over and over again in bad policy based on inadequate information.

Meanwhile, his longtime critics on the far right are laughing at Romney. Bryan Fischer, right-wing extremist and leader of the American Family Association, openly gloated: "Let me ask you this question, people have raised this question," he said Friday on his radio show. "If Mitt Romney can be pushed around, intimidated, coerced, co-opted by a conservative radio talk show host in Middle America, then how is he going to stand up to the Chinese? How is he going to stand up to Putin? How is he going to stand up to North Korea if he can be pushed around by a yokel like me?"

Those are indeed the questions that linger after Romney's performance this week.

20120511-04	17:05	SteveG	Fw: Dennis Kucinich: The Power of Now
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from Dennis Kucinich:

I want to share with you this Commencement speech I gave this week to 5000 attendees from over 100 countries at American University in Dubai (AUD). Previous AUD Commencement speakers include President Clinton and Secretaries of State Powell, Albright and Baker. In the speech I strive to inspire the graduates to embrace the power of NOW and to move forward to build communities of peace -- as we all must endeavor to do.

Thank you. Dennis

Dennis J. Kucinich, United States Representative to Congress
Commencement Speech, American University in Dubai
Wednesday, May 9, 2012, Dubai, United Arab Emirates

His Highness, Vice President and Prime Minister of the United Arab Emirates and Ruler of Dubai, Sheikh Mohammad bin Rashid Al Maktoum; Members of the Royal Families of the United Arab Emirates; Dr. Lance de Masi, President of American University in Dubai, Mr. Elias Bou Saab, Executive Vice President, Members of the Board, Members of the Faculty of American University of Dubai, Esteemed Officials, Parents and Sponsors, Students, Alumni and Friends and especially you, our dear Honored Graduates:

Thank you for the great honor of addressing this esteemed gathering upon an occasion of singular importance in the lives of each and every one of you. This day announces you are prepared. The journey which brought you here has conferred upon you a commencement to the future of your dreams.

For when you ascend this stage you are confidently passing through a portal in the time and space of your life, presenting yourself to the world as a person of accomplishment, as an individual prepared to tap the transformative power of this moment which brings to bear every talent and ability you have developed, pouring it into the moment when you present yourself at the door of opportunity, the moment which is called NOW. The NOW which contemplates that the past, the present, and the future exist simultaneously, the power of NOW as it connects with eternity, your timeless self which finds its power in expression of self recreation, self actualization. "Come my friends," wrote the poet Tennyson, " 'tis not too later to seek a newer world."

Behold the new world being born in the moment. The NOW which comes again and again and again in each and every day forward as you watch for it, recognize it, be mindful of the possibility it presents, be grateful for its

immanent unfolding potential. The NOW which bids you to think, to speak, to act, to challenge, to create, to change. The NOW which declares that years of preparation have come to meet the seedling of a single moment. The NOW which whispers: "Do not spill a single seed." The NOW which makes joyous the challenge of venturing forth in faith. The NOW which bids you, "Come, you are ready!" And reminds you there is no time to waste. The NOW which unveils your deepest potential when you summon the courage to knock upon an unfamiliar door. The NOW which has been secretly awaiting your arrival.

"What you seek, is seeking you," wrote the poet Rumi. The NOW which waits for you to embrace its endless possibilities, its extraordinary beauty of presence. Yours, the restless quest of the human soul for true purpose, for a place in the world, for life, for love, for a spiritual home all awaits your attention, your touch, your gaze. Your place in the scheme of things is unfolding and even resistance can be your friend as you align with the time signature with which the hand of destiny inscribes your name. Be relentless in pursuit of excellence. Though your reach exceeds your grasp every moment, "What's a heaven for?" asked the poet Browning.

What do I know? From my earliest, I heard my life's drummer banging out a rapid tempo, a quick march to college, to work, to public life, all at the same time, twenty years old working two jobs, going to school, running for city council. When I put my ear to the ground I could hear the heart of the world beating and I rushed excitedly to embrace it fully, no apprenticeships, only the experience of trying and failing, trying and succeeding, climbing the mountains outside or the mountains within, looking up, walking up, running up one path, then another, then still another, sometimes pausing as the crowd passed me by. Then, a new moment, sensing a new possibility, stepping out into the crowd, coursing with it, stepping briskly to meet it, to embark upon a new destination, a new life, the unfolding of each and every day: I chose a career in public service while I was still in college in Cleveland, Ohio, and was elected America's youngest Mayor at age 31.

I ran for Congress five times in a period of twenty-five years before I was elected. I know what it is to try and to fail. Do not fear failure. Let failure be your friend. It prepares you for what you desire to achieve and you arrive at your new destination with growing beauty and wisdom, thanking your friend for the visit.

My dear graduates, the world needs you. I know how important you are. The raw, kinetic, intellectual and spiritual power here from one hundred countries can save our planet from destruction.

We are constantly being told that there is nothing we can do about war, nothing we can do about global climate change, nothing we can do about poverty. Those who accept the self-fulfilling prophecies of doom may have a stake in the status quo or, fearing a new order, delay change. Life, however, is not inert. The human heart is not inert. Its rhythms excite to the call of the future. The soul is not inert. Its eyes see the future.

George Bernard Shaw wrote in *Back to Methuselah* "You see things and say 'Why'? I dream things that never were; and I say, 'Why not?'" He spoke to the capacity of vision, of possibility thinking, of the certainty that life is a profoundly creative experience, an expression of the workings of the mind, the heart and the soul -- the nonphysical, spiritual world which sanctifies the physical world. Ideas come through our senses, bathing in a world of dreams, imagination, the magical, mysterious province of poets and prophets, inventors and painters, the realm of Michelangelo's *Creation of Adam* where man receives from the divine the spark of life.

A photograph by the Hubble Telescope has captured a picture of the Eagle Nebula: "Pillars of Creation," that place in deep space where stars are born. Quantum physicists have identified gluon particles which exist in interstitial space, the space between the spaces, the unseen element of our physical universe which holds together the world with the primal energy of the Big Bang.

We travel back and forth upon the bridge between spirit and matter, at large in a physical universe, we breathe in the eternal spiritual sustenance. Inspired, we fling our dreams back into the physical world and create islands in the sea, buildings which reach to the heavens, new structures in society, and new ways of living. Possibility thinking is a science grounded in old truths. It is the capacity to call forth new outcomes.

Let me share with you a few examples from my own experience. Again and again in my public career I have confronted circumstances where I was told there was nothing I could do about a given condition: a city electric system sold to a giant private utility under indecent conditions. "Nothing you can do," said my top advisors. I saw

something else, organized a civic movement and a three year struggle resulted in regaining for the people of my community a light system which recently observed its 100th anniversary. Two hospitals were to be closed. "Forget it," I was told. There is nothing you can do. I saw another possibility. Creative legal action ensued, the community rallied, hospitals were saved one still stands. A steel mill which provided thousands of jobs was about to be closed. Again I was told, "there is nothing you can do." Long story short, we organized the community, intervened in court, stopped the shutdown of the mill long enough for a buyer to emerge and that mill today is the largest integrated steel mill in the world.

There is a practical physics to civic involvement and action. Look deeply into the appearances of things. Deeper within is another possibility. Envision it, call it forward, act upon it, drawing upon that same elemental energy which comes from where the eternal first touched us and where we touched the eternal, where stars are born.

What I have learned from experience is this -- when you see a condition you desire to see change, when you seek to make something happen and you are told it is not possible -- that may be exactly the place to put your energy, to change the outcome. When you do, people will say a miracle occurred. We live in a world where miracles are waiting to be welcomed.

This brings me to a thought I would like to share with you, my fellow citizens of the world; We have inherited a world where war is dropped on our doorstep and we are asked to adopt it as our own. We are told deadly force must be used to change people's conduct. Violence to stop the violence, war to prevent war, war to end war. When we believe war is inevitable, we come to accept the self-fulfilling prophecy of war. War happens. We wonder why.

We must call forth from this world which is so fraught with fear and foreboding that which is beautiful and glorious, a new possibility, a new thinking, a new physics, if you will, of peace. We must do it with courage. We must do it in fulfillment of salaam, the peace which comes from the unseen, the peace which comes from the heart, the peace which comes from our collective yearning, the peace which comes from an awareness that the world is one. That all people are interconnected, interdependent, one with the human family, one with the world, one with the spirit, one with the divine.

War is never inevitable. Peace is inevitable if we desire to call it forward, if we approach it as a science. I speak of peace not simply as the absence of war, but as a practice of the science of human relations, as a capacity of human evolution and human development. But if we call peace forward from the unseen we must name it, we must give it structure, we must prepare for it a place to exist - a space to breathe, to be nurtured - to flower, so that it can be appreciated as an expression of that divine spark of creation.

In writing of the unfolding potential of nature, the poet Lowell celebrated the month of June: "Every clod, [or piece of earth], feels a stir of might, an instinct within it that reaches and towers, and groping blindly above it for light, climbs to a soul in grass and flowers." His poem was about the search for the Holy Grail, a sacred vessel said to contain drops of the blood of Christ. Peace is a Holy Grail and the quest for peace is empowered by thoughts of peace, words of peace and actions for peace and attainment of peace. It is a temporal question. It is also a spiritual journey: "Wherewith Allah guideth all who seek His good pleasure to ways of peace and safety, and leadeth them out of darkness, by His will, unto the light, guideth them to a path that is straight." -- Qur'an 5:16

Think of the possibilities if we could create within every nation a place where the best minds and hearts are brought together within the context of a cabinet level position or ministry wherein resides the power to develop social structures for peace and strategies to avert conflict between groups and between states.

Such a proposal exists; I brought it to the United States Congress two months before 9/11. In its simplest expression, it seeks to develop an organized approach to make the daily work of our nation engage our top social and economic scientists to deal with the root causes of domestic violence, spousal abuse, child abuse, gang violence, gun violence, violence against gays, and racial violence. It would develop skills for non-violent conflict resolution on a domestic level, as well as internationally, where such a ministry would be prepared to assist to ameliorate the causes of violence inherent in poverty, lack of access to food, water, shelter and the instability caused by environmental disasters.

As violence is learned, so is peace. Education has a powerful social purpose. A ministry of peace would create the resources for peace education within every culture and within each government to construct a world where we learn to settle differences by tapping the spiritual principles of salaam, shalom, of peace. We are then within reach of creating cultures of vision, cultures of creativity, cultures of unlimited wealth and cultures of sustainability.

I have been in Congress for 16 years and involved in government for the better part of 45 years. I am told, "Dennis, such an idea is so impractical." After all, my nation spends more money for weapons and war than all the other nations of the world put together. We spend so much time, so many resources human and financial preparing for war. Why not begin to spend time and resources preparing for peace?

Will this vision be realized for creating new structures for peace? I was reading a speech given in Dubai in 2007 by His Highness, Sheikh Mohammad bin Rashid Al Maktoum, observing the challenges facing his new organization, the Foundation His Highness created. He quoted a friend: "... in this Foundation you are like one ploughing the sea. The challenge is huge; the gap of knowledge in most of the Arab and Islamic countries is bottomless. There is a lot of talk about building communities of knowledge, but little action. The pit is too wide to be seamed, so why should you weary yourself over this matter?"

At a time when the technology of destruction and the capacity of human destructiveness is so great, this is exactly the time to create a common global effort to build communities of peace, to provide structures in every country to help peace issue forth and flourish. I, too, believe that if we will make of human development a new art, we will set our eyes to the distant horizon and plough the seas with wondrous effect. We can then lift up our eyes to the heavens and, with our imagination, with joyous abandon, plough the stars, and a thundering universe will burst forth with new possibilities and we will make heaven on earth. "Come my friends, 'tis not too late to seek a newer world."

[20120513-02](#) 11:04 SteveB Re: Dennis Kucinich: The Power of Now (reply to SteveG, above)

Definitely a cool guy. Thanks, SteveG.

And as Ram Dass once said, "Be here now."

[20120511-05](#) 20:39 SteveG Speculation vs. Reality

Speculation:

- JP Morgan Chase
- Chesapeake Energy
- BP
- Exxon
- News broadcast
 - Why do you think they did that?
 - What do you think will happen?

Is our whole world based on speculation or is something based on reality?

[20120512-01](#) 08:09 Pam Re: Speculation vs. Reality (reply to SteveG, above)

I read somewhere that we have moved from a production economy to a financial economy, which is pretty obvious when you think about it. "Financial instruments" are real in the sense that corporations are people. We are living in La-La Land.

[20120512-02](#) 09:24 Art "GOP Elephant in the Room: Themselves"

When someone from American Enterprise Institute says this, might pay to read.

"GOP Elephant in the Room: Themselves" by Ezra Klein, *The Washington Post*

May 11, 2012,

(http://www.washingtonpost.com/business/economy/2012/05/11/qIQAZEo7IU_story.html?tid=pm_business_pop)

(Republicans have taken a more polarizing political turn than Democrats in recent years.)

"We have been studying Washington politics and Congress for more than 40 years, and never have we seen them this dysfunctional," wrote Thomas Mann and Norman Ornstein in *The Washington Post*. "In our past writings, we have criticized both parties when we believed it was warranted. Today, however, we have no choice but to acknowledge that the core of the problem lies with the Republican Party."

In Washington, "Mann and Ornstein" are a brand. Mann works at the centrist Brookings Institution, Ornstein at the conservative American Enterprise Institute. Over their four-decade partnership, they have established themselves as the two most respected, committed scholars — and defenders — of the U.S. Congress. They never tire of pointing out that the way the Founders designed the federal government, Congress came first, and it was intended to have an "institutional identity," not a partisan identity. It's that institutional identity, they now say, that is under threat, and more from one party than the other.

Their *cri de coeur* hit a nerve. The column, published two weeks ago, was recommended more than 241,000 times on Facebook. It generated more than 5,000 comments. It was tweeted more than 3,000 times. It made many Republicans very, very angry. But if you want to see why Mann and Ornstein wrote it, look no further than Senator Richard Lugar's concession statement Tuesday night, which showed, in its wan effort to make the two parties sound equivalently extreme, just how much further the Republican Party has gone, and how right Mann and Ornstein were.

Here's Lugar, after losing to Indiana Treasurer Richard Mourdock in the Republican primary:

I don't remember a time when so many topics have become politically unmentionable in one party or the other. Republicans cannot admit to any nuance in policy on climate change. Republican members are now expected to take pledges against any tax increases. For two consecutive presidential nomination cycles, GOP candidates competed with one another to express the most strident anti-immigration view, even at the risk of alienating a huge voting bloc. Similarly, most Democrats are constrained when talking about such issues as entitlement cuts, tort reform and trade agreements.

First, note the policies he highlighted on both sides: Republicans have radicalized on climate, tax and immigration — by any measure, three of the most significant policy problems the country faces. Meanwhile, "most" Democrats are constrained when talking about entitlement programs, tort reform and trade agreements.

"Entitlement programs" — fine, that's a big one. But tort reform and trade agreements? It's like saying Republicans ignore the elephant in the room while Democrats have trouble talking about the guinea pig.

It's not even true. You'll notice that Lugar was careful in his phrasing. Republicans "cannot admit to any nuance" on climate change, they are "expected to take pledges" forswearing any tax increases, and they "competed with one another to express the most strident anti-immigration view." Meanwhile, "most Democrats are constrained when talking about such issues as entitlement cuts, tort reform and trade agreements."

"Cannot admit" is not the same as "constrained from talking." It's not even close, actually. Lugar, a senator known for his deliberate demeanor, clearly chose his words with care. Democrats might be "constrained" when talking about these issues, but they do it. Obama, for instance, has signed free-trade agreements with Colombia, Panama and South Korea. He told CBS's "60 Minutes," "I don't believe malpractice reform is a silver bullet, but I've talked to

enough doctors to know that defensive medicine may be contributing to unnecessary costs,” and he said in his 2011 State of the Union address that he’d be open to “medical malpractice reform to rein in frivolous lawsuits.”

As for entitlements, Democrats cut \$500 billion from Medicare in the Affordable Care Act and created an appointed board designed to make far-reaching, cost-saving reforms to Medicare on an accelerated schedule. You may or may not like those changes, but they’re definitely “entitlement cuts” to Medicare, as Republicans, who successfully campaigned against them in 2010, know full well.

In his August 2011 negotiations with Speaker John Boehner, Obama broached raising the eligibility age for Medicare and slowing the growth in Social Security benefits by “chaining” the program to the consumer price index. At the end, those negotiations fell apart not because Obama couldn’t persuade Democrats to sign onto entitlement changes, but because Boehner couldn’t persuade Republicans to sign onto tax increases. More recently, Senator Kent Conrad, who is chairman of the Senate Budget Committee, proposed the Simpson-Bowles deficit-reduction plan as the Democrats’ long-term budget proposal, with the support of his party’s Senate leadership.

Then, of course, there’s the simple fact that Lugar was in a position even to write this concession speech. Over the past three years, there’s been a systematic effort uniting crucial parts of the conservative infrastructure to cull the Republican Party of legislators who are willing to compromise with Democrats.

Groups such as Americans for Prosperity and the Club for Growth. They targeted Mike Castle in Delaware, Bob Bennett in Utah, Arlen Specter in Pennsylvania, Lisa Murkowski in Alaska, Olympia Snowe in Maine, Orrin Hatch in Utah and, of course, Lugar.

This has exerted a polarizing force on the Republican Party that simply doesn’t exist in today’s Democratic Party. Indeed, Senate Democrats chose to permit Joe Lieberman, who went much further than any of these Republicans in undercutting his party — even endorsing the Republican presidential nominee, John McCain, in 2008 — to keep all of his committee assignments. The move angered liberal activists who had organized a primary challenge to Lieberman in 2006. But just as primary campaigns from the right have shown Republican moderates that they must hew closer to the party line, the Democratic leadership’s embrace of Lieberman proved to Democratic moderates that the party would permit dissension.

The political scientists Keith Poole and Howard Rosenthal provide some independent empirical confirmation of the two parties’ “asymmetric polarization.” They’ve developed a system for tracking congressional polarization all the way back to the first congresses. Their research shows that the “median Republican and Democrat has moved toward their respective ideological poles in the contemporary period, but this effect is considerably larger in the House than the Senate and for Republicans more than Democrats.”

They’ve also found that since 2006, Democratic primaries where the incumbent lost and the challenger took office were as likely to end with a more moderate legislator holding the seat as with a more liberal one. In Republican primaries, 75 percent of the successful challengers were more conservative — and that’s without considering instances, such as Specter’s campaign in Pennsylvania, where a more conservative challenger drove an incumbent out of the race or into the other party.

Whether the Republican Party is “the problem” is a subjective judgment. Perhaps you loathe taxes and, in the face of all available evidence, consider global warming a hoax. In that case, the Republican Party is doing exactly what it should be doing. But there is simply no denying that the Republican Party has gone much further right than the Democratic Party has gone left, and that, from policy pledges to primary challenges, it has done much more to discourage its members from compromising than the Democratic Party has. So if you think polarization is the main problem in Washington today, then Mann and Ornstein are right: Your beef is largely with the Republicans.

Back in the BC era (before computers) when I was reading a lot I used to focus on an author I kind of liked and read all his/her books I could find. For a while I got hooked on a kind of quirky SF sort of writer, Philip Wylie. He wrote a lot of disaster type books and his last was *The End of The Dream* I think he passed away before it was

published. It took place in a not to distant future when humans had pretty much destroyed the plant by pollution. The theme of the story was a writer documenting what had happened by finding odd extracts from old newspapers that indicated what was happening but, each by themselves, didn't paint a complete picture. I remember the one about the pig in Iowa who had been fed on discarded TV dinners blowing up because of gas accumulation, when someone threw a lit cigar next to the pig at the State Fair. There are many more but you get the idea.

What set this off was a TV news article about collapsing honey bee populations. It has been going on for some time and, if it continues, will have very serious affects on agriculture production in this country. Researchers at Purdue University think they have identified the culprit, a coating used to protect seeds prior to planting, but of course the producer, Bayer in this case, denies any connection.

At any rate the book is an interesting read and may well portray the future.

20120512-04 10:07 SteveG Fw: CREDO Action Petition: Tell Obama: Stop the Fricking Fracking!

from CREDO Action:

Across the country, the risky method of gas drilling known as "fracking" is causing polluted air, explosions, earthquakes and even flammable tap water.

But incredibly, as frackers rush to expand the practice, it remains totally unregulated by federal health and safety officials.

The Obama Administration has begun the process of passing some rules, but it's clear they are bowing to pressure from the gas industry at every turn.

Last week, the Department of Interior released a draft rule to regulate fracking on federal lands, and like a number of opportunities before it, the Obama Administration caved to the gas industry to allowing major loopholes that fail to protect us from the dangers of fracking.¹ The agency is now accepting comments on the rule, and we need to urge them to protect public land, water and health — not the gas industry.

Tell the Obama Administration: Stop caving to the gas industry! Pass strong rules to protect federal lands from fracking.

http://act.credoaction.com/campaign/interior_fracking/

You know that when American Petroleum Industry president Jack Gerard is crowing about how closely the administration is listening to the natural gas industry, and a lobbyist from the American Chemistry Council says "It took a while for the administration to realize the role it could play...What we've seen is an evolution in thinking," we are in trouble.²

But after months of pressure from industry³ the latest Interior rule represents another in a string of recent concessions by the Obama Administration, including weakening a draft rule to reduce air pollution from fracking, refusing to take action to ban diesel fuel from fracking fluid, and even downplaying EPA studies which found water contamination from fracking in Pennsylvania and Wyoming.

Fracking, involves pumping millions of gallons of water and a largely secret mix of toxic chemicals, deep underground at high pressure, to literally fracture the rock and release trapped pockets of natural gas.

One fifth of all fracking happens on federal lands, so the Interior Department rule could be an opportunity for the administration to fill the void for strong national standards to at least force companies to disclose the toxic chemicals they are pumping through our groundwater, and set strong standards for safe disposal of the fracking fluid.

But the rule fails to do even that — and we need to urge the Department of Interior to substantially strengthen it.

Tell the Obama Administration: Stop caving to the gas in industry! Pass strong rules to protect federal lands from fracking.

Rather than set strong standards for chemical disclosure and water treatment, the new rule opens up key loopholes on both.⁴

This allows gas drillers to keep secret until after they drill the toxic mix of chemicals in their fracking fluid — making it far easier for them to avoid accountability in cases of water contamination.

Additionally, the rule continues to allow dangerous open evaporation pits drillers use to dispose of the huge volumes of toxic fracking wastewater that is recovered after fracking. The open chemical mixture goes airborne, unleashing toxic air pollution in the surrounding area. These pits can also leak this toxic fluid into land and water, and pose a major spill risk from floods or storms.

As the gas industry rapidly scrambles to expand fracking all over the country, it isn't waiting for states or the federal government to adequately fill the regulatory void that was created when Dick Cheney exempted fracking from federal regulation in his 2005 energy bill.

It is clear that the Obama Administration has been hearing from the gas industry. Now they need to hear from us too — there is no time to waste to pass strong rules to protect us from the substantial dangers posed by natural gas fracking.

Thank you for defending our water from fracking.

Elijah Zarlin, Campaign Manager, CREDO Action from Working Assets

¹"Interior Department Releases Proposed Rules for Fracking on Public Lands," Earthworks, May 7, 2012 (<http://act.credoaction.com/r/?r=6883886&id=39994-3891339-Otqgj7x&t=10>).

²"Obama Warms to Energy Industry by Supporting Natural Gas," Bloomberg, May 9, 2012 (<http://act.credoaction.com/r/?r=6886910&id=39994-3891339-Otqgj7x&t=11>).

³"Gas industry presses White House on 'fracking' rules," The Hill, April 9, 2012 (<http://thehill.com/blogs/e2-wire/e2-wire/220581-gas-industry-takes-fracking-rule-concerns-to-white-house->).

⁴"Obama Administration Caves To Oil And Gas Industry On Controversial Fracking Rules," Republic Report, May 3, 2012 (<http://act.credoaction.com/r/?r=6883887&id=39994-3891339-Otqgj7x&t=12>).

20120512-05	10:08	SteveG	" Pilots Aren't Guinea Pigs: Ground the F-22..."
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"Pilots Aren't Guinea Pigs: Ground the F-22 Until Dangerous Oxygen Problem Resolved" by Dana Liebelson, POGO

May 9, 2012, (<http://pogoblog.typepad.com/pogo/2012/05/pilots-arent-guinea-pigs-ground-the-f-22-until-dangerous-oxygen-problem-resolved.html>)



Two elite pilots that came forward to CBS's "60 Minutes" saying that they refuse to fly the F-22 Raptor because of potentially deadly oxygen-system problems have dramatically changed their positions, according to the *Daily Press's* HRMilitary.com. The pilots are claiming, through their attorney, that they are now willing to fly the aircraft because the Air Force recently removed a charcoal filter which may have been causing the health issues.

If you think this sounds fishy, you're not the only one. There have been multiple reports that the Air Force appears to be attempting to intimidate the pilots who spoke out. The about-face shouldn't quell growing evidence that an unknown problem or problems is making the F-22 too unsafe for pilots to fly. According to *Air Force Times*, the problems are even affecting maintainers who work on the plane.

The pilots, who despite the health allegations have consistently praised the F-22, should not be blamed for possibly fearing for their livelihoods and changing their public opinions. However, after multiple groundings, validated reports of pilot health and safety problems, a fatal crash due to a malfunction, and now these new reports—it's time to say enough is enough. The F-22, which has yet to be used in a combat zone—like Iraq, Afghanistan and Libya—should be grounded until we know exactly what's causing the dangerous health and safety problems.

"This is a classic case of the Air Force putting hardware before people, and generals sacrificing pilots in order to avoid embarrassment" Pierre Sprey, who co-designed the F-16 and the A-10 jets, told POGO.

Lawmakers should ensure that the pilots who came forward are fully protected from reprisal now, as Congressman Adam Kinzinger (R-IL) has already done, to his great credit. They also owe these and other service members a much-needed upgrade of the laws that protect military whistleblowers, which lag far behind protections for civilian federal workers and many private sector employees.

As you may remember, the F-22 is the most expensive fighter jet (per unit) ever purchased by the U.S. government. Every hour an F-22 flies costs taxpayers around \$63,929 (in years it is not grounded). The whole fleet cost \$77.4 billion, or a casual \$412 million per jet (in FY 2011 dollars). POGO has outlined the F-22's cost and procurement problems for years. In 2010, Secretary of Defense Robert Gates stopped procurement of the jet thanks to the gigantic cost of each F-22—a major victory for taxpayers.

The F-22 fleet was grounded twice in 2011 because of problems with the aircraft's oxygen system. The grounding was lifted, but the cause was never determined. POGO's Winslow Wheeler, Director of the Straus Military Reform Project said that "there was good reason to ground the fleet then—there's even more of a reason now."

According to Sprey, Navy Safety Center figures show that the incident rate of “hypoxia-like” symptoms has more than quadrupled since the last grounding was lifted. Hypoxia occurs when the brain can’t get enough oxygen, which leads to severe disorientation. F-22 pilot Josh Wilson told “60 Minutes” that he had such severe in-flight hypoxia, doctors put him in a hyperbaric chamber upon landing.

Pilot Jeremy Gordon told the program that among F-22 pilots, there’s a phenomenon called “the raptor cough”—where “the vast majority will be coughing a lot of the time.” Gordon also pointed to other latent problems pilots have: like vertigo and dizziness when they go to bed. These symptoms also suggest that the problem may go beyond simple oxygen deprivation; the possibility of toxins in the air system must be considered.

According to an ABC News report, the Air Force reported that there have been at least 25 cases since 2008 of F-22 pilots experiencing various symptoms. Additionally, the deadly crash that occurred in November 2010 during a training exercise in Alaska has been attributed to a malfunction in the jet’s On-Board Oxygen Generating System (OBOGS).

Still, the Air Force initially blamed the oxygen-deprived pilot for the crash, not the F-22. It has back-tracked somewhat since.

So what’s depriving these pilots of oxygen? That’s the problem—no one knows. Sprey hypothesizes that: “[The fact that] so many F-22 pilots have persistent coughing and vertigo means that, even though a small fraction of incidents could be due to oxygen deprivation or carbon monoxide, most of the F-22 incidents have to be due to some toxin in the F-22 breathing air supply that has persistent after effects and that is NOT present in other OBOGS, such as the F-18’s air supply.”

Some of these toxins could be hydraulic fluid, combustion byproducts, off-gassing glues, overheated plastics or composites—or what Sprey believes to be the most likely candidate—stealth coatings, which are “freshly reapplied on the F-22 all the time.”

That’s one possible explanation, but ultimately, the cause has yet to be determined.

And while the Air Force is definitely implementing safety measures and claiming that it’s addressing concerns, it’s doing so while keeping the pilots in the planes—and it doesn’t know how or when the problem occurs or how long it’s going to take to figure it out.

"I believe we are making significant progress toward an answer," said Gen. Mike Hostage, commander of Air Combat Command, in a statement. "I don't want to characterize how far or when because I don't own the progress of science."

It should be reiterated that in order to fly an F-22, pilots have to be the best of the best, with superb pilot skills, command of the highly complex flying and avionics systems, and unwavering dedication. But of those 200 top pilots certified to fly the jet, there are several beyond just Major Jeremy Gordon and Captain Josh Wilson who have silently expressed their profound concern by taking out additional life insurance for fear of the aircraft being their undoing.

The F-22 program should never have been allowed to come to this. It’s time to stop holding the aircraft above its pilots—the F-22 should be grounded now and for as long as it takes to understand and fix the problem. It’s non-appearance in war makes this a task we can clearly take.

20120512-06 14:35 Dennis “How the Ayn Rand-Loving Right Is Like a Bunch of Teen Boys Gone Crazy”

“How the Ayn Rand-Loving Right Is Like a Bunch of Teen Boys Gone Crazy” by Sara Robinson, AlterNet

May 11, 2012 (<http://www.alternet.org/story/155393/>)

Flowers are nice, but this Mother's Day, what I really want is for these immature boys to grow up already.

If, as George Lakoff says, we view politics through the metaphor of family, then Mother's Day is a good time to ask the question: Where's Mom in this picture? What are all those dirty socks and pizza boxes doing in the living room? (Seriously: it looks like a frat house in here.) Who's been drinking the beer I hid in the basement fridge?

And, sweet mother of God: how did we end up letting the 16-year-old boys take over the entire household?

Make no mistake: all this Ayn Rand libertarian me-first-and-the-rest-of-you-go-to-hell stuff -- the there's-no-government-like-no-government theology that's now being piously intoned as Holy Received Truth by everybody, male and female, in the GOP -- is, very precisely, the kind of politics you'd come up with if you were a 16-year-old boy trying to explain away his dependence on Mom.

Parents? I don't have any parents. I raised myself, on roots and berries and small vermin I dug up in vacant lots. That lady hanging around, feeding me and nagging me and picking up my socks and driving me to practice? She's just the nanny state. That bitch. I hate her.

Society? There's no such thing as society. There's only what I want right now, which is the ultimate good in my universe. And what I want right now is more time on the Xbox, pizza money, and the keys to the family car.

The future? If I pursue everything I want now, then the future will magically take care of its self. Dinner will appear. So will clean socks and the next-gen Xbox.

Obligations? I am God's gift to the world. I don't owe it anything. In fact: it owes me -- just for being so magnificent, cute and special. (Even my mom thinks so.)

On behalf of America's mothers, let me say: I have had enough of this. I don't care how cute they are: it's high time these so-called "libertarian" freeloaders get off the couch, stand up, and show some respect to the rest of us who've done the hard work that makes their cushy lives possible.

You know what I want for Mother's Day? I want these so-called "self-made men" to grow up and get a life.

No More "Nanny State" — Ever

Also: I'm putting them on notice: I don't ever want to hear one more word about the "nanny state." Not one. Not ever again.

First of all : It's ugly. It just reeks of that 16-year-old boy being told to clean up his mess. The big sigh. The dramatic eye-roll. The drawn-out, agonized, "yyezzzz, mommmm..." that lets you know you're about to spend the rest of the evening in a passive-aggressive battle during which your teenager will generate enough inertia to bring the rotation of this and several neighboring galaxies to a dead stop.

The "nanny state" is making you do the dishes, and then it wants you to clean out the garage. You poor persecuted darling. Go dial 1-976-WAAAAAH.

Second of all: It's sexist as hell. Anti-feminist at its very core. It says that the concerns that we most identify with mothers -- cleaning up your crap, minding your manners, not annoying other people, taking responsibility for your actions -- are intrusive and unwarranted infringements on your essential freedom, instead of the basic adult responsibilities that are required of everybody if society is going to remain free and functional.

It says that the power and authority by which mothers -- "nannies," in this construction -- set the rules within the family is illegitimate. It belittles women who are bossy enough to insist on adult behavior from men.

It suggests that the things women are stereotypically most bossy about -- politically, this would be issues like child welfare and education (looking after your little brother), the environment (housework), and peace and social justice (playing fair and being nice) are beneath the attention and dignity of men. You can almost hear John Wayne: "Don't

you worry about what your Mom says, boys. Dad's here, and he'll set her straight. (Big fat wink. Deep chuckle.) You go right on ahead with what you were doing."

(Of course, when the Duke said stuff like this, the result was usually a shrieking, hair-pulling fight with Maureen O'Hara, which always ended with her turned triumphantly over his knee. And then, after a good, sound spanking that put the little lady firmly back in her place, he'd wrestle her tiny hands away so she couldn't slap him, and kiss her until she stopped struggling. And she'd love every minute of it, because in this deranged view of gender relationships, that kind of manhandling is just what all pi*s*y women are really secretly asking for.)

It implies that Real Americans are honor-bound to resist any and all exercise of female bossiness in the sacred name of preserving their almighty "freedom."

And then, as the final insult, it identifies all government action with that exaggerated feminine weakness. Corporations: the domains of independent, active men who are busy creating a better world for themselves -- and therefore, automatically, for everybody else as well. Government: the domain of dependent, passive women who are fussing about everybody's business, insisting that they clean up their stuff, eat right, play nice, and get to bed at a decent hour.

Government, like Mom, is a real buzz-killer. And also powerless. You can safely ignore her. After all: all she can do is yell at you, ground you, and dock your allowance. And Dad (or, in the case of government, his lawyers and lobbyists) is the truly sane and powerful one around here, and can be counted on to set her straight when he gets home.

How to Tell the Men from the Boys

Conservatives completely fetishize masculinity. They idolize sports heroes, warriors and the Manly Jesus of modern evangelicalism. They eagerly seek the trappings that will buttress their sense of maleness in their own minds -- guns, big trucks, enough money and power to push other people around. The further right you go, the more exaggerated this focus on hypermasculinity becomes.

Psychiatrist Stephen Ducat explained this phenomenon at long length in his book, *The Wimp Factor*. Ducat's research shows that right-wing men are so obsessed with the external trappings of maleness precisely because they've failed to develop the inner qualities and accept the obligations that are required of actual adult men. It's all show, with nothing solid on the inside to back it up. And the more fragile their masculinity feels to them, the more exaggerated the outer display they put on is.

Given the insecurity that lies at the heart of this sad compensation, it's especially ironic that they've got the whole country buffaloed into thinking this is appropriate adult behavior. We've ended up with a culture of maleness that emphasizes the objectification and degradation of women, a lack of male accountability for anything that happens in the culture, and a definition of masculinity that's all about empty shows of dubious might -- like peacocks preening on parade.

For the record: This is a comic-book stereotype of manhood as it's imagined by little boys. But it's not the real deal - - not even close.

The essential difference that separates the men and the boys is that men understand and accept that they have an obligation to the greater good, and are willing to unflinchingly step up to that responsibility. They commit to their families. They work to improve their homes and communities, so they're safe and nurturing places for everyone to be. They take the long view as they plan for their kids' future. They look out for people around them who are weaker than they are. And they respect and cherish the co-parents of their children as their equal partners in that effort.

Adult men do not resent being asked to contribute to the collective whole. They know that their actions have consequences, and that they are responsible for the impact of those consequences on the greater good of the community.

As a veteran mom, I understand that it's totally developmentally appropriate for a teenage boy to desperately struggle to separate from his female parent as he begins to find his way toward his adult male identity. But at some point, that oppositional process is supposed to come to an end -- usually in the early- to mid-20s, with a reconciliation and renewed acceptance of Mom as a useful guide in his life. And, if he's straight, there will be a mature acceptance of his obligations to a female partner and their children as well.

A 50-year-old CEO who's still whining because Big Bad Government is asking him to clean up his sh*t, look after his little brother, and not act like a psychopath in public is flat-out suffering from arrested emotional and social development. He's not a grown man, despite his thousands of employees and millions in salary. He's still that teenager, hating on Mom because she dared to remind him that he's still deeply dependent on the resources provided by his larger family. And as a mother, I'd invite other moms to join me in calling out this immaturity for what it is, wherever we see it.

What I really want for Mother's Day is for America's Lost Boys -- the libertarian Peter Pans, the free-market feral children, the neo-liberal ramblin' men -- to stop pretending that they're something special and uniquely free because they've managed to disassociate themselves from women's care and women's concerns.

I want respect for the role mothers play -- both in our personal families, and in our national one. I want some recognition of the fact that the issues that are typically dismissed by the masculine fetishists as "women's issues" or "nanny-state meddling" are, in fact, the issues that the future of our country most depends on. And I want the common wealth and the common good -- the health and wealth of our national family -- to get the same kind of loving respect that all mothers are entitled to.

Flowers and chocolate and a nice brunch are appreciated, too. But they're a meaningless insult -- a sop to authority we don't have, and aren't seen as entitled to -- long as we let the 16-year-olds run the household the other 364 days out of the year.

20120513-01 09:19 SteveB Fw: Mother's Day Card (for next year, now)

from MoveOn:

Have you sent a Mother's Day card to all the moms in your life?

Our friends at MomsRising—who spend every day fighting for good stuff like paid family leave and lead-free toys—have created a fun, personalized online card you can send for free with just a few clicks.

Check it out:

<http://www.moveon.org/r?r=275435&id=41282-20195165-rOg%3D3kx&t=1>.

And Happy Mother's Day to all the moms fighting for a better world for everyone.

Thanks for all you do.

—Elena, Tate, Victoria, Carrie, and the rest of the team

P.S. Our allies at StrongFamilies have made an amazing set of Mama's Day cards that show the full diversity of moms, kids, and families—check them out, too, and share with moms you love:

<http://www.moveon.org/r?r=275444&id=41282-20195165-rOg%3D3kx&t=2>.

20120513-03 12:58 SteveB "How to End This Depression"

This is a really smart guy. Maybe we should listen? I wonder why, like Robert Reich, he's not in the Administration? President Obama sure seems to love the bankers...it's like they have him convinced that a "hands-off" attitude is best. On the other hand, what is a black President ever going to get through a Republican House?

We said before that maybe Keynes was right, after all. Krugman certainly agrees—apparently with good reason.

"How to End This Depression" by Paul Krugman, *The New York Review of Books*

May 24, 2012, (<http://www.nybooks.com/articles/archives/2012/may/24/how-end-depression/?pagination=false>)

The depression we're in is essentially gratuitous: we don't need to be suffering so much pain and destroying so many lives. We could end it both more easily and more quickly than anyone imagines—anyone, that is, except those who have actually studied the economics of depressed economies and the historical evidence on how policies work in such economies.

The truth is that recovery would be almost ridiculously easy to achieve: all we need is to reverse the austerity policies of the past couple of years and temporarily boost spending. Never mind all the talk of how we have a long-run problem that can't have a short-run solution—this may sound sophisticated, but it isn't. With a boost in spending, we could be back to more or less full employment faster than anyone imagines.

But don't we have to worry about long-run budget deficits? Keynes wrote that "the boom, not the slump, is the time for austerity." Now, as I argue in my forthcoming book (*End This Depression Now!*, Norton, 2012). —and show later in the data discussed in this article—is the time for the government to spend more until the private sector is ready to carry the economy forward again. At that point, the US would be in a far better position to deal with deficits, entitlements, and the costs of financing them.

Meanwhile, the strong measures that would all go a long way toward lifting us out of this depression should include, among other policies, increased federal aid to state and local governments, which would restore the jobs of many public employees; a more aggressive approach by the Federal Reserve to quantitative easing (that is, purchasing bonds in an attempt to reduce long-term interest rates); and less timid efforts by the Obama administration to reduce homeowner debt.

But some readers will wonder, isn't a recovery program along the lines I've described just out of the question as a political matter? And isn't advocating such a program a waste of time? My answers to these two questions are: not necessarily, and definitely not. The chances of a real turn in policy, away from the austerity mania of the last few years and toward a renewed focus on job creation, are much better than conventional wisdom would have you believe. And recent experience also teaches us a crucial political lesson: it's much better to stand up for what you believe, to make the case for what really should be done, than to try to seem moderate and reasonable by essentially accepting your opponents' arguments. Compromise, if you must, on the policy—but never on the truth.

Let me start by talking about the possibility of a decisive change in policy direction.

Nothing Succeeds Like Success

Pundits are always making confident statements about what the American electorate wants and believes, and such presumed public views are often used to wave away any suggestion of major policy changes, at least from the left. America is a "center-right country," we're told, and that rules out any major initiatives involving new government spending.

And to be fair, there are lines, both to the left and to the right, that policy probably can't cross without inviting electoral disaster. George W. Bush discovered that when he tried to privatize Social Security after the 2004 election: the public hated the idea, and his attempted juggernaut on the issue quickly stalled. A comparably liberal-leaning proposal—say, a plan to introduce true "socialized medicine," making the whole health care system a government program like the Veterans Health Administration—would presumably meet the same fate. But when it comes to the kind of policy measures I have advocated—measures that would mainly try to boost the economy rather than try to

transform it—public opinion is surely less coherent and less decisive than everyday commentary would have you believe.

Pundits and, I'm sorry to say, White House political operatives like to tell elaborate tales about what is supposedly going on in voters' minds. Back in 2011 *The Washington Post's* Greg Sargent summarized the arguments Obama aides were using to justify a focus on spending cuts rather than job creation:

A big deal would reassure independents who fear the country is out of control; position Obama as the adult who made Washington work again; allow the President to tell Dems he put entitlements on sounder financial footing; and clear the decks to enact other priorities later.

Any political scientist who has actually studied electoral behavior will scoff at the idea that voters engage in anything like this sort of complicated reasoning. And political scientists in general have scorn for what *Slate's* Matthew Yglesias calls the pundit's fallacy, the belief on the part of all too many political commentators that their pet issues are, miraculously, the very same issues that matter most to the electorate.

Most real voters are busy with their jobs, their children, and their lives in general. They have neither the time nor the inclination to study policy issues closely, let alone engage in opinion-page-style parsing of political nuances. What they notice, and vote on, is whether the economy is getting better or worse; statistical analyses say that the rate of economic growth in the three quarters or so before the election is by far the most important determinant of electoral outcomes.

What this says—a lesson that the Obama team unfortunately failed to learn until very late in the game—is that the economic strategy that works best politically isn't the strategy that finds approval with focus groups, let alone with the editorial page of *The Washington Post*; it's the strategy that actually delivers results. Whoever is sitting in the White House next year will best serve his own political interests by doing the right thing from an economic point of view, which means doing whatever it takes to end the depression we're in. If expansionary fiscal and monetary policies coupled with debt relief are the way to get this economy moving, then those policies will be politically smart as well as in the national interest.

But is there any chance of actually getting them enacted as legislation?

Political Possibilities

It's not at all clear what the political landscape will look like after the election. But there do seem to be three main possibilities: President Obama is reelected and Democrats also regain control of Congress; Mitt Romney wins the presidential election and Republicans add a Senate majority to their control of the House; the president is reelected but faces at least one hostile house of Congress. What can be done in each of these cases?

The first case—Obama triumphant—obviously makes it easiest to imagine America doing what it takes to restore full employment. In effect, the Obama administration would get an opportunity at a do-over, taking the strong steps it failed to take in 2009. Since Obama is unlikely to have a filibuster-proof majority in the Senate, taking these strong steps would require making use of reconciliation, the procedure that the Democrats used to pass health care reform and that Bush used to pass both of his tax cuts. So be it. If nervous advisers warn about the political fallout, Obama should remember the hard-learned lesson of his first term: the best economic strategy from a political point of view is the one that delivers tangible progress.

A Romney victory would naturally create a very different situation; if Romney adhered to Republican orthodoxy, he would of course reject any government action along the lines I've advocated. It's not clear, however, whether Romney believes any of the things he is currently saying. His two chief economic advisers, Harvard's N. Gregory Mankiw and Columbia's Glenn Hubbard, are committed Republicans but also quite Keynesian in their views about macroeconomics. Indeed, early in the crisis Mankiw argued for a sharp rise in the Fed's target for inflation, a proposal that was and is anathema to most of his party. His proposal caused the predictable uproar, and he went silent on the issue. But we can at least hope that Romney's inner circle holds views that are much more realistic than anything the candidate says in his speeches, and that once in office he would rip off his mask, revealing his true pragmatic, Keynesian nature.

Of course, a great nation should not have to depend on the hope that a politician is in fact a complete fraud who doesn't believe any of the things he claims to believe. And such a hope is certainly not a reason to vote for that politician. Still, making the case for job creation may not be a wasted effort, even if Republicans take it all this November.

Finally, what about the fairly likely case in which Obama is returned to office but a Democratic Congress is not? What should Obama do, and what are the prospects for action? My answer is that the president, other Democrats, and every Keynesian-minded economist with a public profile should make the case for job creation forcefully and often, and keep pressure on those in Congress who are blocking job-creation efforts.

This is not the way the Obama administration operated for its first two and a half years. We now have a number of reports on the internal decision-making processes of the administration from 2009 to 2011, and they all suggest that the president's political advisers urged him never to ask for things he might not get, on the grounds that it might make him look weak. Moreover, economic advisers like Christina Romer who urged more spending on job creation were overruled on the grounds that the public didn't believe in such measures and was worried about the deficit.

The result of this caution was, however, that as even the president bought into deficit obsession and calls for austerity, the whole national discourse shifted away from job creation. Meanwhile, the economy remained weak—and the public had no reason not to blame the president, since he wasn't staking out a position clearly different from that of the GOP.

In September 2011 the White House finally changed tack, offering a job-creation proposal that fell far short of what was needed, but was nonetheless much bigger than expected. There was no chance that the plan would actually pass the Republican-led House of Representatives, and Noam Scheiber of The New Republic tells us that White House political operatives "began to worry that the size of the package would be a liability and urged the wonks to scale it back." This time, however, Obama sided with the economists—and in the process proved that the political operatives didn't know their own business. Public reaction was generally favorable, while Republicans were put on the spot for their obstruction.

And early this year, with the debate having shifted perceptibly toward a renewed focus on jobs, Republicans were on the defensive. As a result, the Obama administration was able to get a significant fraction of what it wanted—an extension of the payroll tax credit, not an ideal stimulus but nonetheless a measure that puts cash in workers' pockets, and maintenance for a shorter period of extended unemployment benefits—without making any major concessions.

In short, the experience of Obama's first term suggests that not talking about jobs simply because you don't think you can pass job-creation legislation doesn't work even as a political strategy. On the other hand, hammering on the need for job creation can be good politics, and it can put enough pressure on the other side to bring about better policy too.

Or to put it more simply, there is no reason not to tell the truth about this depression.

A Moral Imperative

It has been more than four years since the US economy first entered recession—and although the recession may have ended, the depression has not. Unemployment may be trending down a bit in the United States (though it's rising in Europe), but it remains at levels that would have been inconceivable not long ago—and are unconscionable now. Tens of millions of our fellow citizens are suffering vast hardship, the future prospects of today's young people are being eroded with each passing month—and all of it is unnecessary.

For the fact is that we have both the knowledge and the tools to get out of this depression. Indeed, by applying time-honored economic principles whose validity has only been reinforced by recent events, we could be back to more or less full employment very fast, probably in less than two years. All that is blocking recovery is a lack of intellectual clarity and political will.

But one question remains. I have argued that in a deeply depressed economy, in which the interest rates that the monetary authorities can control are near zero, we need more, not less, government spending. A burst of federal spending is what ended the Great Depression, and we desperately need something similar today.

Yet how do we know that more government spending would actually promote growth and employment? After all, many politicians fiercely reject that idea, insisting that the government can't create jobs; some economists are willing to say the same thing. So is it just a question of going with the people who seem to be part of your political tribe?

Well, it shouldn't be. Tribal allegiance should have no more to do with your views about macroeconomics than with your views on, say, the theory of evolution or climate change. The question of how the economy works should be settled on the basis of evidence, not prejudice. And one of the few benefits of this depression has been a surge in evidence-based economic research into the effects of changes in government spending. What does that evidence say?

Before I can answer that question, I have to talk briefly about the pitfalls one needs to avoid.

The Trouble with Correlation

You might think that the way to assess the effects of government spending on the economy is simply to look at the correlation between spending levels and other things like growth and employment. The truth is that even people who should know better sometimes fall into the trap of equating correlation with causation. But let me try to disabuse you of the notion that this is a useful procedure by talking about a related question: the effects of tax rates on economic performance.

It's an article of faith on the American right that low taxes are the key to economic success. But suppose we look at the relationship between taxes—specifically, the share of GDP collected in federal taxes—and unemployment over the past dozen years. What we find is that years with high tax shares were years of low unemployment, and vice versa (see Figure 1). Clearly, isn't the way to reduce unemployment to raise taxes?

Figure 1

**THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN TAXES
AND UNEMPLOYMENT, 2000–2010**

<i>Year</i>	<i>Tax Share of GDP</i>	<i>Unemployment Rate</i>
2000	20.6%	4.0%
2003	16.2%	6.0%
2007	18.5%	4.6%
2010	15.1%	9.6%

Source: Congressional Budget Office

Even those of us who very much disagree with tax-cut mania don't believe this. Why not? Because we're surely looking at spurious correlation here. For example, unemployment was relatively low in 2007 because the economy was still buoyed by the housing boom—and the combination of a strong economy and large capital gains boosted federal revenues, making taxes look high. By 2010 the boom had gone bust, taking both the economy and tax receipts with it. Measured tax levels were a consequence of other things, not an independent variable driving the economy.

Similar problems bedevil any attempt to use historical correlations to assess the effects of government spending. If economics were a laboratory science, we could solve the problem by performing controlled experiments. But it isn't.

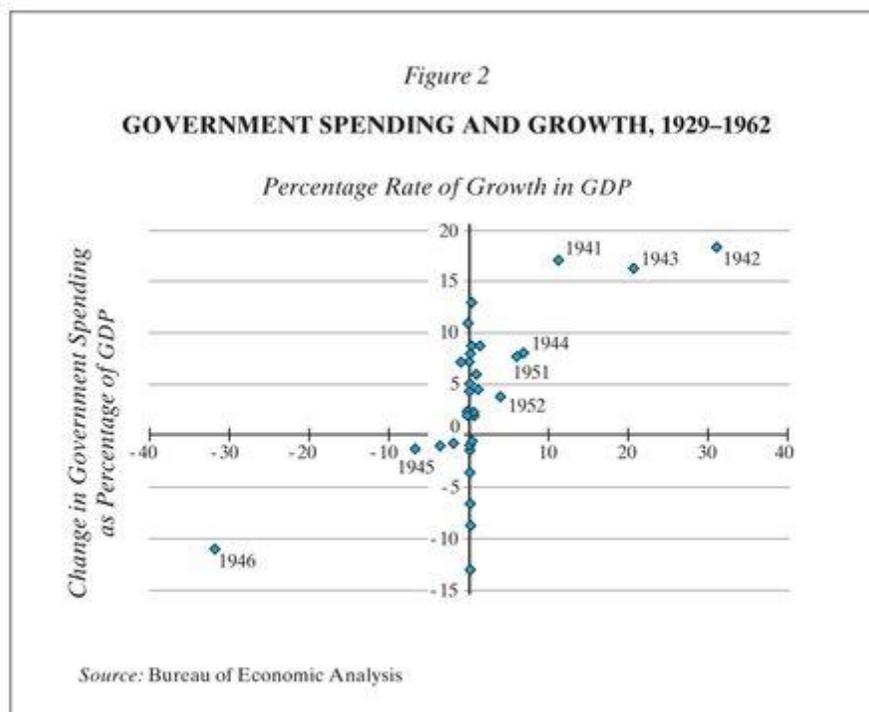
Econometrics—a specialized branch of statistics that’s supposed to help deal with such situations—offers a variety of techniques for “identifying” actual causal relationships. The truth, however, is that even economists are rarely persuaded by fancy econometric analyses, especially when the issue at hand is so politically charged. What, then, can be done?

The answer in much recent work has been to look for “natural experiments”—situations in which we can be pretty sure that changes in government spending are neither responding to economic developments nor being driven by forces that are also moving the economy through other channels. Where do such natural experiments come from? Sadly, they mainly come from disasters—wars or the threat of wars, and fiscal crises that force governments to slash spending regardless of the state of the economy.

Disasters, Guns, and Money

As I wrote, since the crisis began there has been a boom in research into the effects of fiscal policy on output and employment. This body of research is growing fast, and much of it is too technical to be summarized in this article. But here are a few highlights.

First, Stanford’s Robert Hall has looked at the effects of large changes in US government purchases—which is all about wars, specifically World War II and the Korean War. Figure 2 on this page compares changes in US military spending with changes in real GDP—both measured as a percentage of the preceding year’s GDP—over the period from 1929 to 1962 (there’s not much action after that). Each dot represents one year; I’ve labeled the points corresponding to the big buildup during World War II and the big demobilization just afterward. Obviously, there were big moves in years when nothing much was happening to military spending, notably the slump from 1929 to 1933 and the recovery from 1933 to 1936. But every year in which there was a big spending increase was also a year of strong growth, and the reduction in military spending after World War II was a year of sharp output decline.



Big rises and falls in government spending centered on World War II and the Korean War were associated with corresponding booms and busts in the economy as a whole. Each dot represents one year.

This clearly suggests that increasing government spending does indeed create growth and hence jobs. The next question is, how much bang is there per buck? The data on US military spending are slightly disappointing in that respect, suggesting that a dollar of spending actually generates only about fifty cents of growth. But if you know anything about wartime history, you realize that this may not be a good guide to what would happen if we increased spending now. After all, during World War II private-sector spending was deliberately suppressed by

rationing and restrictions on private construction; during the Korean War, the government tried to avoid inflationary pressures by sharply raising taxes. So it's likely that an increase in spending now would yield bigger gains.

How much bigger? To answer that question, it would be helpful to find natural experiments telling us about the effects of government spending under conditions more like those we face today. Unfortunately, there aren't any such experiments as good and clear-cut as World War II. Still, there are some useful ways to get at the issue.

One is to go deeper into the past. As the economic historians Barry Eichengreen and Kevin O'Rourke point out, during the 1930s European nations entered, one by one, into an arms race, under conditions of high unemployment and near-zero interest rates resembling those prevailing now. In work with their students, they have used the admittedly scrappy data from that era to estimate the impact that spending changes driven by that arms race had on output, and have come up with a much bigger bang for the buck (or, more accurately, the lira, mark, franc, and so on).

Another option is to compare regions within the United States. Emi Nakamura and Jon Steinsson of Columbia University point out that some US states have long had much bigger defense industries than others—for example, California has had a large concentration of defense contractors, whereas Illinois has not. Meanwhile, defense spending at the national level has fluctuated a lot, rising sharply under Reagan, then falling after the end of the cold war. At the national level, the effects of these changes are obscured by other factors, especially monetary policy: the Fed raised rates sharply in the early 1980s, just as the Reagan buildup was occurring, and cut them sharply in the early 1990s. But you can still get a good sense of the impact of government spending by looking at the differential effect across states; Nakamura and Steinsson estimate, on the basis of this differential, that a dollar of spending actually raises output by around \$1.50.

So looking at the effects of wars—including the arms races that precede wars and the military downsizing that follows them—tells us a great deal about the effects of government spending. But are wars the only way to get at this question?

When it comes to big increases in government spending, the answer, unfortunately, is yes. Big spending programs rarely happen except in response to war or the threat thereof. However, big spending cuts sometimes happen for a different reason: because national policymakers are worried about large budget deficits and/or debts, and slash spending in an attempt to get their finances under control. So austerity, as well as war, gives us information on the effects of fiscal policy.

It's important, by the way, to look at the policy changes, not just at actual spending. Like taxes, spending in modern economies varies with the state of the economy, in ways that can produce spurious correlations; for example, US spending on unemployment benefits has soared in recent years, even as the economy weakened, but the causation runs from unemployment to spending rather than the other way around. Assessing the effects of austerity therefore requires painstaking examination of the actual legislation used to implement that austerity.

Fortunately, researchers at the International Monetary Fund have done the legwork, identifying no fewer than 173 cases of fiscal austerity in advanced countries over the period between 1978 and 2009. And what they found was that austerity policies were followed by economic contraction and higher unemployment.

There's much, much more evidence, but I hope this brief overview gives a sense of what we know and how we know it. I hope in particular that when you read me or Joseph Stiglitz or Christina Romer saying that cutting spending in the face of this depression will make it worse, and that temporary increases in spending could help us recover, you won't think, "Well, that's just his/her opinion." As Romer asserted in a recent speech about research into fiscal policy:

The evidence is stronger than it has ever been that fiscal policy matters—that fiscal stimulus helps the economy add jobs, and that reducing the budget deficit lowers growth at least in the near term. And yet, this evidence does not seem to be getting through to the legislative process.

That's what we need to change.

[20120513-04](#) 15:15 SteveB Fw: Daily Kos Action: Stop the Sale of Trayvon Shooting Targets

Tell me that this is not incredibly unbelievable...

from Daily Kos:

Please help stop the sale of Trayvon Martin shooting targets by asking Mars, Inc. to take legal action against the Hiller Armament Company. Click here to sign the petition:

http://campaigns.dailykos.com/p/dia/action/public/?action_KEY=144.

The silhouette on the shooting target is faceless. But the hoodie, the Skittles and the iced tea leave nothing to the imagination. This is meant to be Trayvon Martin, the unarmed 17-year-old shot to death in February in Sanford, Florida.

Skittles brand candy is clearly depicted on the targets. The Wm. Wrigley Jr. Company, a division of Mars, Inc., produces and markets Skittles. They could stop the sale of these targets by taking legal action against the Hiller Armament Company, which sells the targets online.

Stop the sale of Trayvon Martin shooting targets by asking Mars, Inc. to take legal action against the Hiller Armament Company.

Keep Fighting, Meteor Blades, Daily Kos

[20120513-05](#) 17:04 SteveB HAPPY MOTHER'S DAY (Gomez – "Bring It On")

Today's Incredible Video Could Be Important to Your Very Safety!

Give it a chance... be here now...

MUST SEE AND HEAR UNTIL THE END.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RMgAzefouTM&feature=related>

ALSO A HAPPY MOTHER'S DAY PRESENT TO ALL YOU QUINTESSENTIAL MOMS OUT THERE! MUCHAS GRACIAS!

[20120513-06](#) 20:16 SteveG Re: HAPPY MOTHER'S DAY (Gomez – "Bring It On") (reply to SteveB, above)

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[20120513-07](#) 21:17 SteveB Re: HAPPY MOTHER'S DAY (Gomez – "Bring It On") (reply to SteveG, above)

Darn! I wonder if this one works for you? [And you too, Art! –SteveB]

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AgizC2R6_l8&feature=related

[20120513-08](#) 22:24 SteveG Re: HAPPY MOTHER'S DAY (Gomez – "Bring It On") (reply to SteveB, above)



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[20120513-09](#) 23:58 SteveG Quote: Howard Zinn on Class Warfare

One percent of the nation owns a third of the wealth. The rest of the wealth is distributed in such a way as to turn those in the 99 percent against one another: small property owners against the propertyless, black against white, native-born against foreign-born, intellectuals and professionals against the uneducated and the unskilled. These groups have resented one another and warred against one another with such vehemence and violence as to obscure their common position as sharers of leftovers in a very wealthy country - Howard Zinn

<http://www.bikeandthelike.com/maine.html>

Low Tide Between the Mainland & the Island of the Eagle's Nest



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

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