



FRIENDS OF THE MIDDLE NEWSLETTER #138 — MAY 15, 2012

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

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The War on Gays Continues

(posted by Steven W. Baker / SteveB, May 15, 2012)

Regardless of the truth or fiction of Mitt Romney's gay haircutting story, Republicans continue to try to beat down everyone but their rich buddies. Make that—even including some of their rich buddies! I read that some rich gay man was asking Romney to return his campaign donation. Ouch! "Keep yer damned mittens off my money, you robotic creep!"

"Mitt Romney Bullying Story Creates Message Headache for House Vote" by Laura Bassett and Sam Stein, Huffington Post

May 14, 2012, (http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/05/14/mitt-romney-bullying-washington-post_n_1515844.html?ref=politics)

Last week's blockbuster report in the *Washington Post* that Mitt Romney bullied a closeted gay classmate in prep school creates a bit of uncomfortable timing for House Republicans as they consider a reauthorization of the Violence Against Women Act.

The House will vote this week on VAWA. But rather than follow the Senate's lead, House GOP leadership will consider a pared-down version that does not extend protections to gay and lesbian victims of domestic abuse. House Republicans have insisted that such an extension was unnecessary.

But with Romney, the presumptive Republican presidential nominee, eager to change the subject to different matters, the House bill could not be more poorly timed -- inviting critics to portray the GOP as insensitive to the serious threats of violence the LGBT community faces.

"The Republican Party is certainly not making friends when the news of the week is that the president is for gay marriage, Mitt Romney was an anti-gay bully in high school, and House Republicans don't think gay people should fall under violence protections," said Michael Cole-Schwartz, communications director for the Human Rights Campaign. "It's one thing to have a conversation about marriage, where obviously there are different opinions on it, but when you get into the realm of 'should we protect people from violence and bullying,' one would hope that these partisanship issues would go out the window."

Romney apologized for what he called his "hijinks and pranks" in high school during a radio interview last week, and he said he didn't know that his classmate was gay. But he also said he was "not going to be too concerned" about

the *Washington Post* story, a remark that seems to downplay the seriousness of the incident at a time when anti-gay bullying is at the forefront of the national conversation.

Amanda Henneberg, a spokeswoman for Romney, referred The Huffington Post to a statement the campaign put out on VAWA's reauthorization in mid-April, which said Romney wanted the bill passed "without it turning into a political football." Pressed specifically for the candidate's position on extending protections to gay and lesbian Americans, Henneberg did not return a request for comment.

House Republicans have been less vague. GOP members of the House Judiciary Committee voted down several measures that would have included protections for LGBT victims of domestic violence in the House version of the VAWA reauthorization. One of those measures, sponsored by Rep. Mike Quigley (D-Ill.), sparked a heated argument after Chairman Lamar Smith (R-Texas) said "there is little data" to support the need for "special protected status" for LGBT people.

Quigley told HuffPost that as a supporter of gay rights, the debate was "startling and traumatic" for him.

"The folks that sit next to me in Judiciary Committee, I feel like they're scoring this, trying to figure out how many bills can they get out there, how many statements can they make to say 'I'm more anti-gay than you,'" he said. "I'd like to see us move toward universal acceptance, and it pains me to think we're going in the opposite direction with a major party. I actually get the feeling that it's almost like a competition to be the most anti-gay, and it's a shame Romney can't pull away from that and lead."

"What I heard from [Republicans] on my first day was, 'If you want to get along with us, stay away from guns, gays and God,' and I haven't seen them move away from that," he continued. "If anything, as they go farther to right socially, they've latched onto that stronger and stronger."

Democrats have certainly sensed a political opening. The Obama campaign and allied committees criticized Romney in the wake of last week's bullying story. Meanwhile, the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee sent out an email to supporters on Monday asking them to sign a petition holding Republicans accountable for their failure to support an anti-gay bullying bill.

"Nine out of 10 LGBT students are bullied in school – and many times much worse," the email says. "Congressman Jared Polis and Senator Al Franken have taken on this difficult issue by offering the Student Non-Discrimination Act. The bill would simply give LGBT kids the same civil rights protections guaranteed by other anti-discrimination laws... Now get this: Republicans in Congress won't bring it to a vote and Mitt Romney refuses to say whether he supports it."

CORRECTION: A previous version of this article stated that the DCCC sent out a fundraising email Monday. It has been corrected to reflect that the email directed supporters to a petition and did not ask for money.

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from MoveOn.org:

Every once in a while a story comes along that captures a candidate and what he represents. **And *The Washington Post* just did that by revealing a dark incident from Mitt Romney's past.**

At 18, he led a group of boys who hunted down younger student John Lauber because he *seemed* gay to them.¹ They held Lauber down, screaming and crying, while Romney cut off his dyed-blond hair. It's something that haunted Lauber and those who participated in his assault decades later.

But Romney laughed it off in a radio interview last week.² **And the right-wing media is pushing the Romney campaign's spin that this bullying story is nothing.**³

Romney's right that this election isn't about what happened 48 years ago. It's about the man who, in business, picked on struggling companies, fired their workers, pocketed the profits, and then dumped the companies back out riddled with debt.⁴

It's about a man whose policies would take from those struggling in a tough economy, to give to those on top. Because after 48 years one thing hasn't changed for Romney: **there are people who count and people who don't, like young John Lauber, or the 99% of us who get beat up by Romney's policies.**

Why does this matter? **Because Romney's ahead of Obama or running even in the latest polls and has a real good shot at winning.**⁵ And that's *before* conservative super PACs will spend an unprecedented \$300 million to tear Obama down.⁶

So we need Americans to think about the light this story sheds on Romney today. But with the Romney camp and their Fox News friends trying to get the media to shrug this horrifying incident off as youthful hijinks, it's going to take thousands of us, across the country, writing to our newspapers about why this matters.

Write your letter to the editor about what Romney's past bullying says about him today:

http://pol.moveon.org/lte/lte_t.html?zip=94709<e_campaign_id=136&id=41393-20195165-ZYgpU6x

As I wrote about Romney in a Huffington Post op-ed today (see below): "The man who rallied his chums to bully a vulnerable kid has produced a set of prescriptions that are striking in the degree to which they advantage his NASCAR-owning buddies over everyone else."

And those policies tell us exactly who Romney thinks counts and who doesn't:

- The wealthiest 1% deserve bigger tax breaks, while people who rely on Social Security and Medicare should have their benefits cut.⁷
- Wall Street executives deserve a bailout, not prosecution, for crashing our economy; while auto workers should face unemployment, foreclosure, and bankruptcy.⁸
- Trust-fund kids, like Romney, deserve the best education money can buy, while lower-income kids should have Pell grant funding slashed.⁹

Mitt Romney thought he was teaching Lauber a lesson when he held him down to cut off his hair. Instead, it's a lesson for all of us about what kind of man he is—and what kind of president he would be.

But if Romney and the right-wing media get their way, it's a lesson most Americans will miss. **That's why we have to tell it in one of the most read sections of every newspaper—the letters page—so Romney can't count us out.**

Write your letter to the editor about how Romney is trying to count the 99% out.

Thanks for all you do.

P.S. Another way to spread the word about the importance of the Romney bullying story is to read and share my op-ed, which was just published in the Huffington Post.

–Justin, Elena, Emily, Mark, and the rest of the team

Sources:

¹"Mitt Romney's prep school classmates recall pranks, but also troubling incidents," *The Washington Post*, May 11, 2012, <http://www.moveon.org/r?r=275508&id=41393-20195165-ZYgpU6x&t=6>.

²"Kilmeade and Friends" syndicated radio show, May 10, 2012, <http://www.moveon.org/r?r=275509&id=41393-20195165-ZYgpU6x&t=7>.

³"Fox News analyst: Romney gay bullying story is 'nothing,'" *The Raw Story*, May 13, 2012, <http://www.moveon.org/r?r=275518&id=41393-20195165-ZYgpU6x&t=8>.

"Is Mitt Romney a Bully?" *The American Prospect*, May 10, 2012, <http://www.moveon.org/r?r=275520&id=41393-20195165-ZYgpU6x&t=9>.

⁴"FLASHBACK: Romney's Private Equity Firm Caused Several Corporate Bankruptcies, Thousands Of Layoffs, Think Progress, April 12, 2011, <http://www.moveon.org/r?r=275519&id=41393-20195165-ZYgpU6x&t=10>.

⁵"Latest 2012 General Election: Romney vs. Obama Polls," *The Huffington Post*, May 14, 2012, <http://www.moveon.org/r?r=275521&id=41393-20195165-ZYgpU6x&t=11>.

⁶"Campaign commercials give hint of ad war to come," *The Boston Herald*, April 19, 2012, <http://www.moveon.org/r?r=275525&id=41393-20195165-ZYgpU6x&t=12>.

⁷"Analysis: Romney plan strongly favors the rich," *CBS News*, March 2, 2012, <http://www.moveon.org/r?r=275514&id=41393-20195165-ZYgpU6x&t=13>.

"Mitt Romney: Cut Medicare, Social Security benefits for seniors," *Daily Kos*, February 24, 2012, <http://www.moveon.org/r?r=275515&id=41393-20195165-ZYgpU6x&t=14>.

⁸"Romney credits Bush, Wall St. bailout for avoiding depression," *NBC Politics*, March 21, 2012, <http://www.moveon.org/r?r=275510&id=41393-20195165-ZYgpU6x&t=15>.

⁹"Romney's Attack on Obama's College Affordability Record," *The Nation*, May 8, 2012, <http://www.moveon.org/r?r=275517&id=41393-20195165-ZYgpU6x&t=16>.

"Prank or Pattern? Why Romney's Bullying Is Relevant to the Election" by Justin Ruben, *Huffington Post*

May 13, 2012, (http://www.huffingtonpost.com/justin-ruben/prank-or-pattern-why-romn_b_1513555.html)

Five high school seniors at an elite prep school stalk, then jump a younger student with a new haircut they think looks too gay. Their 18-year-old ringleader cuts off the offending locks, while the victim screams and begs for help. Decades later, the victim and several participants are still haunted by the attack.

It's not a scene from *Bully*. It's a revealing episode from Mitt Romney's formative years.

We've all had moments in high school or college we'd rather forget. And certainly we all have the capacity to change. But sometimes behavior as a young adult can reveal much about one's present character. Romney's challenge is that his prep school bullying lines up well with the rest of what voters have learned about him.

Here's the simple picture that's emerging: If you're less fortunate or less powerful, Mitt Romney won't think twice about walking over you if you're in his way.

Mitt was born into a stratum of society that most Americans know only from movies and magazines. And maybe because of that, he often appears not to understand or care about people weaker than him -- even when they're harmed by his actions. If you're a member of the jet set, or if you're useful to him financially or politically, he's got your back. But if you're not as powerful you may be as good as invisible, or worse -- like his classmate John Lauber -- someone he'll tear down in order to lift himself up.

Romney made his millions in large part by laying off tens of thousands of people. So when he says, "I like to fire people," well, what would you expect from the silver-spoon bully who, according to one classmate, turned a prestigious prep school into something akin to *Lord of the Flies*? At a time when many Americans fear for their own financial future, it's no surprise many wonder if they're also on Romney's chopping block.

Even the bizarre episode with Seamus, the family dog who spent 12 hours strapped to the roof of the Romney car, fits the pattern. Mitt Romney seems to have a serious empathy problem.

Now we're seeing parallels as Romney lays out his policy agenda for the country. The man who rallied his chums to bully a vulnerable kid has produced a set of prescriptions that are striking in the degree to which they advantage his NASCAR-owning buddies over everyone else.

According to a recent CBS News report, Romney's tax plan "strongly favors the rich." While cutting taxes for his fellow millionaires, he'd actually raise taxes on the bottom 20 percent of earners. Of course this is the same Romney who earlier this spring said, "I'm not concerned about the very poor," as though existing antipoverty programs are sufficient.

Or consider how his policies would harm women. Romney would allow bosses to deny birth control coverage to their employees. He'd overturn health care reform, including a provision to stop insurers from billing women more than men for the same coverage. And he wants to "get rid" of funding for Planned Parenthood -- a lifesaving source of health care for millions.

None of these would pose much difficulty for Romney or his privileged friends. But if you're a woman who needs health care, in Romney's world, you could be out of luck.

Same goes for the low-income students who rely on Pell Grants as they pursue a higher education and the American Dream. They'd see cuts of up to \$170 billion under the Ryan budget Romney has embraced -- which could put college out of reach.

And if you're gay? Romney's bullying prep school behavior was just the start of it. Before a recent Fox News interview, Romney struck a mock effeminate tone as he considered a pink tie -- a nasty jab gay people anywhere would be quick to recognize. Again, there's a policy connection. Romney wants to end marriage equality in the six states that have it. No "evolution" here.

After the *Washington Post* broke the bullying story, Romney apologized for his high school "pranks and hijinks." He took pains to explain that it's been a long time since prep school, and that he's changed.

The problem for voters hunting for a leader who cares about their problems and will take their side, is that it doesn't appear he has.

20120514-01	10:10 Pam	The End of the World?
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The May 14th *New Yorker* contains an article that sounds like a death knell for all life as we know it. It is impossible to read it and not be terrified. Picture lemmings running off a cliff. A race is on between global warming and the scientists working on ways to pull us back from the brink that is already visible on the horizon. I feel fairly certain that the world will be here for as long as I'm alive, but I'm not so certain that by the time my grandsons are my age they will have an inhabitable planet to call home. Something in contemporary culture recognizes the threat and finds various ways to express it. The movies depict super-human enemies who fly around blowing things up. Religious prophets foretell Armageddon. Novelists create apocalyptic scenarios. Scientists continue publishing their findings, and politicians continue ignoring them. We all sense that something terrible is coming, and no one has an idea about how to avert the disaster. Pushed to the wall, I guess I would say I have faith that science will figure out a way to deflect the sun's rays and preserve a viable earth. I also believe that if that happens, it will be the prosperous north that will see the most benefit. Africa will get hotter, drier, and poorer. Low-lying areas from India to Indonesia will be submerged and hundreds of thousands will drown. Many of our greatest American cities will be home for whatever fish survive the warming of the oceans. Populations will push harder against borders, and the rich will retreat to the mountaintops and erect walls. I look at my lush back yard and can't help imagining it a desert. I know that getting depressed solves nothing, and I know I'm not going to stop driving my car or buying blueberries from Chile. I know that if everyone continues to live as I do, humanity will not survive long. But knowing solves nothing either. Unless knowledge is married to action and our species responds as one, I fear we are doomed. Things never happen as you expect. We oldsters remember that haunting movie *On the Beach*. The

nuclear threat, while still very real, does not seem as dangerous as it did then. Who could have foreseen that the sun itself would prove our undoing? I feel about as useful as Chicken Little wringing her hands while the sky falls.

[20120514-03](#) 11:17 Bill Re: The End of the World? (reply to Pam, above)

It's worse than you think. The drones—same issue of the *New Yorker*—are keeping an eye on you as you wheeze out another labored breath of bad air. The drones, of course, will be dispatched by those accumulating a dossier on you through their monitoring of the internet.

I jest. But I am uncomfortable with what seems to be a secular warming trend. But never fear; we can take comfort that our Department of Defense is building global warming scenarios into its war planning.

[20120514-05](#) 11:29 Pam Re: The End of the World? (reply to Bill, above)

I read the article about drones too. "Oh, brave new world, that has such people in it." Big Brother is watching you. He's probably looking through your webcam as we speak.

[20120514-02](#) 10:23 Art Re: The End of the World? (reply to Pam, 10:10, above)

On a more serious note (for Pam only) it's the little things you need to notice. The collapse of honey bee colonies, the bat decimation (they eat lots of insects that will now produce even more insects), the collapse of fish populations, the incredible reef decline, the pine beetle in the American West (good article in the *Washington Post* today on research on that) (whole mountains near our place in Colorado have turned brown as all, and I mean all, the pine trees die - a tinder box waiting to explode), the destruction of the rain forests in Brazil and Indonesia and on and on.

Not good, and we have a political party who thinks the solution to everything is to drill for more oil to pump more carbon into the atmosphere.

[20120514-04](#) 11:22 Bill Re: The End of the World? (reply to Art, above)

What a comfort!

[20120514-19](#) 22:36 SteveB Re: The End of the World? & "High-Resolution Image from Electro-L Satellite Shows Planet in Single Shot" (reply to all, above)

Amazing photos and video:

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/05/11/high-resolution-earth-photo-electro-l-satellite_n_1510538.html?ref=mostpopular

Ah...this exquisite, fragile little world...

[20120514-06](#) 16:21 SteveB Re: Gomez—"Bring It On" & "Jumpin' Jack Flash" (reply to SteveG & Art, FotM Newsletter #137)

How 'bout the Gomez video here:

<http://vimeo.com/39377347> ???

or

<http://www.gomeztheband.com> ???

On the band's homepage (above) they're giving away "Jumpin' Jack Flash" (live) and an entire live CD (*Live: Volume 3 Los Angeles*). Very highly recommended and what do you have to lose?

Try to hear "Bring It On". It's on the live CD mentioned above or maybe something else works for you on YouTube...???

[20120514-08](#) 17:32 SteveG Re: Gomez—"Jumpin' Jack Flash" (reply to SteveB, above)

Got it – thanks for the extra effort.

[20120514-09](#) 17:44 GaryF Re: Gomez—"Jumpin' Jack Flash" (reply to SteveB, above)

This was OK, but you just can't beat hearing the Stones do it live... I'm not sure, but I think I've experienced that either 5 or 6 times.

[20120514-10](#) 18:05 SteveB Re: Gomez—"Jumpin' Jack Flash" (reply to GaryF, above)

You are 100% correct, except that you can't really do that now. I mean, ya, you can go see a bunch of old men in Depends do an amazingly good job—for old men—of playing old (only) rock 'n roll.

At the same time, you can go see Gomez now, IN THEIR PRIME! I believe they will be playing in Jacksonville this summer. (See <http://www.gomeztheband.com>, and get free MP#'s too.)

I think we should try to go see them, if at all possible, when I'm there next year staying at your house for two weeks. :-)

These guys picked up the mantle where the Beatles, Stones, the Who, Clapton, Led Zeppelin, Pink Floyd, etc. dropped it years ago. They carry the "British Invasion" forward in a modern, lovely, surprisingly adult, and rockin' way—yet hardly anybody is listening. Almost nobody seems to be able to hear the genius for the din. I hope you will.

Good listenin'!

[20120514-11](#) 18:32 SteveB "America as a Shining Drone Upon a Hill"

There can be no such thing as "American Exceptionalism" if we are to have our rightful place in this world. And we do have a rightful place at that table of nations, and maybe even a seat at the best end. But the rest of the world does not react well when America considers itself to be above the rest of the family and its toilet to be the middle of the table.

"America as a Shining Drone Upon a Hill" by Tom Engelhardt, NationofChange

May 14, 2012, (<http://www.nationofchange.org/america-shining-drone-upon-hill-1337002235>)



Here's the essence of it: you can trust America's *crème de la crème*, the most elevated, responsible people, no matter what weapons, what powers, you put in their hands. No need to constantly look over *their* shoulders.

Placed in the hands of evildoers, those weapons and powers could create a living nightmare; controlled by the best of people, they lead to measured, thoughtful, precise decisions in which bad things are (with rare and understandable exceptions) done only to truly terrible types. In the process, you simply couldn't be better protected.

And in case you were wondering, there is no question who among us are the best, most lawful, moral, ethical, considerate, and judicious people: the officials of our national security state. Trust them implicitly. They will never give you a bum steer.

You may be paying a fortune to maintain their world -- the 30,000 people hired to listen in on conversations and other communications in this country, the 230,000 employees of the Department of Homeland Security, the 854,000 people with top-secret clearances, the 4.2 million with security clearances of one sort or another, the \$2 billion, one-million-square-foot data center that the National Security Agency is constructing in Utah, the gigantic billion headquarters the National Geospatial Intelligence Agency recently built for its 16,000 employees in the Washington area -- but there's a good reason. That's what's needed to make truly elevated, surgically precise decisions about life and death in the service of protecting American interests on this dangerous globe of ours.

And in case you wondered just how we know all this, we have it on the best authority: the people who are doing it - the only ones, given the obvious need for secrecy, capable of judging just how moral, elevated, and remarkable their own work is. They deserve our congratulations, but if we're too distracted to give it to them, they are quite capable of high-fiving themselves.

We're talking, in particular, about the use by the Obama administration (and the Bush administration before it) of a growing armada of remotely piloted planes, a.k.a. drones, grimly labeled Predators and Reapers, to fight a nameless, almost planet-wide war (formerly known as the Global War on Terror). Its purpose: to destroy al-Qaeda-in-whatever and all its wannabes and look-alikes, the Taliban, and anyone affiliated or associated with any of the above, or just about anyone else we believe might imminently endanger our "interests."

In the service of this war, in the midst of a perpetual state of war and of wartime, every act committed by these leaders is, it turns out, absolutely, totally, and completely legal. We have their say-so for that, and they have the documents to prove it, largely because the best and most elevated legal minds among them have produced that documentation in secret. (Of course, they dare not show it to the rest of us, lest lives be endangered.)

By their own account, they have, in fact, been covertly exceptional, moral, and legal for more than a decade (minus, of course, the odd black site and torture chamber) -- so covertly exceptional, in fact, that they haven't quite

gotten the credit they deserve. Now, they would like to make the latest version of their exceptional mission to the world known to the rest of us. It is finally in our interest, it seems, to be a good deal better informed about America's covert wars in a year in which the widely announced "covert" killing of Osama bin Laden in Pakistan is a major selling point in the president's reelection campaign.

No one should be surprised. There was always an "overt" lurking in the "covert" of what now passes for "covert war." The CIA's global drone assassination campaign has long been a bragging in Washington, even if it couldn't officially be discussed directly before, say, Congress. The covertness of our drone wars in the Pakistani tribal borderlands, Somalia, Yemen, and elsewhere really turns out to have less to do with secrecy -- just about every covert drone strike is reported, sooner or later, in the media -- than assuring two administrations that they could pursue their drone wars without accountability to anyone.

A Classic of Self-Congratulation

Recently, top administration officials seem to be fanning out to offer rare peeks into what's truly on-target and exceptional about America's drone wars. In many ways, these days, American exceptionalism is about as unexceptional as apple pie. It has, for one thing, become the everyday language of the presidential campaign trail. And that shouldn't surprise us either. After all, great powers and their leaders tend to think well of themselves. The French had their "*mission civilisatrice*," the Chinese had the "mandate of heaven," and like all imperial powers they inevitably thought they were doing the best for themselves and others, sadly benighted, in this best of all possible worlds.

Sometimes, though, the American version of this does seem... I hate to use the word, but exceptional. If you want to get a taste of just what this means, consider as Exhibit One a speech by the president's counterterrorism "tsar," John Brennan, at the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars. According to his own account, he was dispatched to the center by President Obama to provide greater openness when it comes to the administration's secret drone wars, to respond to critics of the drones and their legality, and undoubtedly to put a smiley face on drone operations generally.

Ever since the Puritan minister John Winthrop first used the phrase in a sermon on shipboard on the way to North America, "a city upon a hill" has caught something of at least one American-style dream -- a sense that this country's fate was to be a blessed paragon for the rest of the world, an exception to every norm. In the last century, it became "a shining city upon a hill" and was regularly cited in presidential addresses.

Whatever that "city," that dream, was once imagined to be, it has undergone a largely unnoticed metamorphosis in the twenty-first century. It has become -- even in our dreams -- an up-armored garrison encampment, just as Washington itself has become the heavily fortified bureaucratic heartland of a war state. So when Brennan spoke, what he offered was a new version of American exceptionalism: the first "shining drone upon a hill" speech, which also qualifies as an instant classic of self-congratulation.

Never, according to him, has a country with such an advanced weapon system as the drone used it quite so judiciously, quite so -- if not peacefully -- at least with the sagacity and skill usually reserved for the gods. American drone strikes, he assured his listeners, are "ethical and just," "wise," and "surgically precise" -- exactly what you'd expect from a country he refers to, quoting the president, as *the* preeminent "standard bearer in the conduct of war."

Those drone strikes, he assured his listeners, are based on staggeringly "rigorous standards" involving the individual identification of human targets. Even when visited on American citizens outside declared war zones, they are invariably "within the bounds of the law," as you would expect of the preeminent "nation of laws."

The strikes are never motivated by vengeance, always target someone known to us as the worst of the worst, and almost invariably avoid anyone who is even the most mediocre of the mediocre. (Forget the fact that, as Greg Miller of the *Washington Post* reported, the CIA has recently received permission from the president to launch drone strikes in Yemen based only on the observed "patterns of suspicious behavior" of groups of unidentified individuals, as was already true in the Pakistani tribal borderlands.)

Yes, in such circumstances innocents do unfortunately die, even if unbelievably rarely -- and for that we couldn't be more regretful. Such deaths, however, are in some sense salutary, since they lead to the most rigorous reviews and reassessments of, and so improvements in, our actions. "This too," Brennan assured his audience, "is a reflection of our values as Americans."

"I would note," he added, "that these standards, for identifying a target and avoiding... the loss of lives of innocent civilians, exceed what is required as a matter of international law on a typical battlefield. That's another example of the high standards to which we hold ourselves."

And that's just a taste of the tone and substance of the speech given by the president's leading counterterrorism expert, and in it he's no outlier. It catches something about an American sense of self at this moment. Yes, Americans may be ever more down on the Afghan war, but like their leaders, they are high on drones. In a February *Washington Post*/ABC News poll, 83% of respondents supported the administration's use of drones. Perhaps that's not surprising either, since the drones are generally presented here as the coolest of machines, as well as cheap alternatives (in money and lives) to sending more armies onto the Eurasian mainland.

Predator Nation

In these last years, this country has pioneered the development of the most advanced killing machines on the planet for which the national security state has plans decades into the future. Conceptually speaking, our leaders have also established their "right" to send these robot assassins into any airspace, no matter the local claims of national sovereignty, to take out those we define as evil or simply to protect American interests. On this, Brennan couldn't be clearer. In the process, we have turned much of the rest of the planet into what can only be considered an American free-fire zone.

We have, in short, established a remarkably expansive set of drone-war rules for the global future. Naturally, we trust ourselves with such rules, but there is a fly in the ointment, even as the droniacs see it. Others far less sagacious, kindly, lawful, and good than we are do exist on this planet and they may soon have their own fleets of drones. About 50 countries are today buying or developing such robotic aircraft, including Russia, China, and Iran, not to speak of Hezbollah in Lebanon. And who knows what terror groups are looking into suicide drones?

As the *Washington Post's* David Ignatius put it in a column about Brennan's speech: "What if the Chinese deployed drones to protect their workers in southern Sudan against rebels who have killed them in past attacks? What if Iran used them against Kurdish separatists they regard as terrorists? What if Russia used them over Chechnya? What position would the United States take, and wouldn't it be hypocritical if it opposed drone attacks by other nations that face 'imminent' or 'significant' threats?"

This is Washington's global drone conundrum as seen from inside the Beltway. These are the nightmarish scenarios even our leaders can imagine *others* producing with their own drones and our rules. A deeply embedded sense of American exceptionalism, a powerful belief in their own special, self-evident goodness, however, conveniently blinds them to what they are doing right now. Looking in the mirror, they are incapable of seeing a mask of death. And yet our proudest export at present, other than Hollywood superhero films, may be a stone-cold robotic killer with a name straight out of a horror movie.

Consider this as well: those "shining drones" launched on campaigns of assassination and slaughter are increasingly the "face" that we choose to present to the world. And yet it's beyond us why it might not shine for others.

In reality, it's not so hard to imagine what we increasingly look like to those others: a Predator nation. And not just to the parents and relatives of the more than 160 children the Bureau of Investigative Journalism has documented as having died in U.S. drone strikes in Pakistan. After all, war is now the only game in town. Peace? For the managers of our national security state, it's neither a word worth mentioning, nor an imaginable condition.

In truth, our leaders should be in mourning for whatever peaceful dreams we ever had. But mention drones and they light up. They're having a love affair with those machines. They just can't get enough of them or imagine their world or ours without them.

What they can't see in the haze of exceptional self-congratulation is this: they are transforming the promise of America into a promise of death. And death, visited from the skies, isn't precise. It isn't glorious. It isn't judicious. It certainly isn't a shining vision. It's hell. And it's a global future for which, someday, no one will thank us.

20120514-12 19:09 Art "Five Facts That Put America to Shame"

"Five Facts That Put America to Shame" by Paul Buchheit, NationofChange

May 14, 2012, (<http://www.nationofchange.org/five-facts-put-america-shame-1337005024>)

"Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses...I lift my lamp beside the golden door!" These words, from poet Emma Lazarus, were inscribed on the Statue of Liberty over 100 years ago. Today the golden door has a lock on it, paid for with record profits from the health care, education, and financial industries.

1. We're near the bottom of the developed world in children's health and safety.

According to a 2007 UNICEF report, the U.S. ranked last among 21 OECD nations in an assessment of child health and safety. The assessment measured infant mortality, immunization, and death from accidents and injuries.

A related 2009 OECD study generally agreed, placing the U.S. 24th out of 30 OECD countries for children's health and safety. It also showed the devastating effects of inequality in our country. Despite having the second-highest average income for children among the 30 OECD countries, the U.S. ranked 27th out of 30 for child poverty (percentage of children living in households that are below 50% of the median income).

2. We've betrayed the young people who were advised to stay in school.

Over 40% of recent college graduates are living with their parents, dealing with government loans that average \$27,200. The unemployment rate for young people is about 50%. More than 350,000 Americans with advanced degrees applied for food stamps in 2010.

As Washington lobbyists endeavor to kill a proposed bill to reduce the interest rates on student debt, federal loans remain readily available, and so colleges go right on increasing their tuition.

Meanwhile, corporations hold \$2 trillion in cash while looking for investments and employees in foreign countries, and American students are forced to accept menial positions. Yet delusions persist about our new generation of would-be workers. Conservatives are all bubbly about today's young entrepreneurs creating their own jobs -- jobs that "don't yet exist."

3. The main source of middle-class wealth has been largely wiped out.

American homeowners owe almost as much as the students, with \$700 billion of debt over and above the value of their homes.

This removes the only source of wealth for middle America, especially for blacks and Hispanics. Remarkably, for every dollar of NON-HOME wealth owned by white families, people of color have only one cent.

So when minority families were specifically targeted for high-risk, subprime loans that could be re-packaged and sold for a quick short-term profit, most of their assets were erased. Median wealth fell 66% for Hispanic households and 53% for black households. For whites the decline was 16%.

With a disturbing note of irony, Sanford Weill, the banker largely responsible for the reversal of the mortgage-protecting Glass-Steagall Act, was elected to the American Academy of Arts & Sciences for "extraordinary accomplishment and a call to serve."

4. We give prison sentences for smoking marijuana, but not for billion-dollar fraud.

About half of our world-leading prison population is in jail for non-violent drug offenses. Americans have also been arrested for handing out free food in a park. Mothers in Ohio and Connecticut were jailed for enrolling their kids in out-of-district schools. As of 2003 in California there were 344 individuals serving sentences of 25 years or more for shoplifting as a third offense, in many cases after two non-violent offenses.

How does the market deal with this steady tide of petty crime? It strives for more. The new trend of private prisons is dependent on maintaining a sizable prison population to guarantee profits, with no incentive for rehabilitation.

As the number of inmates has surged, the people who devastated countless American lives "get out of jail free." The savings and loan fraud cost the nation between \$300 billion and \$500 billion, about 100 times more than the total cost of burglaries in 2010. The financial system bailout has already cost the country \$3 trillion. Goldman Sachs packaged bad debt, sold it under a different name, persuaded ratings services to label it AAA, and then bet against their own financial creation by selling it short. Other firms accused of fraud and insider trading were Morgan Stanley, Bear Stearns, Bank of America, Countrywide Financial, and Wells Fargo. The New York Times reported in 2008 that the Justice Department had postponed the bribery or fraud prosecutions of over 50 corporations, choosing instead to enter into agreements involving fines and 'monitoring' periods.

5. You can have health care, if you can pay for it.

A recent Commonwealth Fund study compared U.S. health care spending to 12 other OECD countries. The data shows that reducing our costs to the median level of spending among the OECD countries would save us \$1.5 trillion a year, more than our entire deficit.

Unfortunately, insurance companies and pharmaceutical companies and hospital administrators won't hear of it. There's too much money to be made. Bypass surgery in the U.S. costs 2 to 3 times more than in Great Britain, Canada, France, and Germany. Cataract surgery costs 4 times more.

That's if you can pay for it. There are currently about 50 million uninsured Americans. At the other extreme are \$2,400 oxymoronic penthouse hospital suites complete with butler and grand piano. Or, for those who don't get out much, emergency rooms in the home, with private cell-phone access to "concierge doctors."

Inequality in our country is so severe that 120,000 health care workers could have been hired with the salary paid to one man. That's a \$40,000 salary for 40 health care workers for every one of the 3,000 counties in the United States. Instead, \$5 billion dollars went to one man who reportedly made his first big haul (\$4 billion, in 2007) by conspiring with Goldman Sachs in the above-mentioned short sale subterfuge.

The result of ignoring the health needs of the greater population, according to a report in the Annual Review of Public Health, is that "the health rankings of the United States have declined substantially when compared with other nations."

Privatization simply hasn't worked for health care, mortgage banking, higher education, or prison management.

There is little incentive for profit motivated firms to invest in disadvantaged or underemployed Americans. That's why taxes are necessary -- to provide for the common good, and to return some of the gains from 60 years of productivity to the great majority of Americans who contributed to our growth. Unfortunately, the golden door on the Statue of Liberty seems to have an invisible hand holding it shut.

I think this is an important article, Art, and really pinpoints well what we have to do to fix our problems, though a herd of elephants stands smack dab in the middle of the path!

20120514-14

19:56 SteveM

"Facebook Billionaire Gives Up Citizenship to Escape Bad American Tax Policy"

Baker this may be too difficult for you you understand, but Democratic socialist is bad for the USA

<http://www.dailyfinance.com/2010/07/20/more-rich-americans-renounce-u-s-citizenship-for-lower-taxes/>

<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2131225/Record-number-American-citizens-renouncing-citizenship-avoid-paying-taxes.html>

http://www.swissinfo.ch/eng/specials/expat_woes/US_tax_deadline_sparks_expatriate_ideas.html?cid=8995438

<http://www.rogerhedgecock.com/story/16406745/californias-not-dreamin-this-is-the-nightmare-of-an-obama-second-term>

"Facebook Billionaire Gives Up Citizenship to Escape Bad American Tax Policy" by Daniel J. Mitchell, *Forbes*

May 11, 2012, (http://www.forbes.com/sites/danielmitchell/2012/05/11/facebook-billionaire-gives-up-citizenship-to-escape-bad-american-tax-policy/?utm_source=dlvr.it&utm_medium=twitter)

It is very sad that America's tax system is so onerous that some rich people feel they have no choice but to give up U.S. citizenship in order to protect their family finances.

I've written about this issue before, particularly in the context of Obama's class-warfare policies leading to an increase in the number of Americans "voting with their feet" for places with less punitive tax regimes.

We now have a very high-profile tax expatriate. One of the founders of Facebook is escaping for Singapore. Here are some relevant passages in a Bloomberg article.

Eduardo Saverin, the billionaire co-founder of Facebook Inc. (FB), renounced his U.S. citizenship before an initial public offering that values the social network at as much as \$96 billion, a move that may reduce his tax bill. ...Saverin's stake is about 4 percent, according to the website Who Owns Facebook. At the high end of the IPO valuation, that would be worth about \$3.84 billion. ...Saverin, 30, joins a growing number of people giving up U.S. citizenship, a move that can trim their tax liabilities in that country. The Brazilian-born resident of Singapore is one of several people who helped Mark Zuckerberg start Facebook in a Harvard University dorm and stand to reap billions of dollars after the world's largest social network holds its IPO. "Eduardo recently found it more practical to become a resident of Singapore since he plans to live there for an indefinite period of time," said Tom Goodman, a spokesman for Saverin, in an e-mailed statement. ...Singapore doesn't have a capital gains tax. It does tax income earned in that nation, as well as "certain foreign-sourced income," according to a government website on tax policies there. ...Renouncing your citizenship well in advance of an IPO is "a very smart idea," from a tax standpoint, said Avi-Yonah. "Once it's public you can't fool around with the value." ...Renouncing citizenship is an option chosen by increasing numbers of Americans. A record 1,780 gave up their U.S. passports last year compared with 235 in 2008, according to government records. ..."It's a loss for the U.S. to have many well-educated people who actually have a great deal of affection for America make that choice," said Richard Weisman, an attorney at Baker & McKenzie in Hong Kong. "The tax cost, complexity and the traps for the unwary are among the considerations."

What makes this story amusing, from a personal perspective, is that Saverin's expatriation takes place just a couple of days after my wayward friend Bruce Bartlett wrote a piece for the *New York Times*, in which he said that people like me are exaggerating the impact of taxes on migration.

Here are some key excerpts from Bruce's column.

In recent years, the number of Americans renouncing their citizenship has increased. ...the number of Americans renouncing their citizenship rose to 1,781 in 2011 from 231 in 2008. This led William McGurn of *The Wall Street Journal* to warn that the tax code is turning American citizens living abroad into "economic lepers." The sharply rising numbers of Americans renouncing their citizenship "are canaries in the coal mine," he wrote. The economist Dan Mitchell of the libertarian Cato Institute was more explicit in a 2010 column in *Forbes*, "Rich Americans Voting With Their Feet to Escape Obama Tax Oppression." ...the sharp rise in Americans renouncing their citizenship since 2008 is less pronounced than it appears if one looks at the full range of data available since 1997, when it first was collected. As one can see in the chart, the highest number of Americans renouncing their citizenship came in 1997...The reality is that taxes are just one factor among many that determine where people choose to live. Factors including climate, proximity to those in similar businesses and the availability of amenities like the arts and cuisine play a much larger role. That's why places like New York and California are still magnets for the wealthy despite high taxes. And although a few Americans may renounce their citizenship to avoid American taxes, it is obvious that many, many more people continually seek American residency and citizenship.

I actually agree with Bruce. Taxes are just one factor when people make decisions on where to live, work, save, and invest.

But I also think Bruce is drinking too much of the Kool-Aid being served by his new friends on the left. There is a wealth of data on successful people leaving jurisdictions such as California and New York that have confiscatory tax systems.

And there's also lots of evidence of taxpayers escaping countries controlled by politicians who get too greedy. Mr. Saverin is just the latest example. And I suspect, based on the overseas Americans I meet, that there are several people who quietly go "off the grid" for every person who officially expatriates.

The statistics say these people are "tax traitors" and "economic Benedict Arnolds," but those views are based on a quasi-totalitarian ideology that assumes government has some sort of permanent claim on people's economic output.

If people are leaving America because our tax law is onerous, that's a signal we should reform the tax code. Attacking those who expatriate is the fiscal version of blaming the victim.

20120514-17	21:10 SteveB	Re: "Facebook Billionaire Gives Up Citizenship to Escape Bad American Tax Policy"
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This guy is ridiculous. U.S. tax rates are among the lowest of developed nation in the world—though Singapore can be even lower, true. But this intelligent dude will probably pay more in Singapore and not be a U.S. Citizen. If he enjoys a one-time gain, it's at the loss of U.S. taxpayers who largely created his fortune in the first place. I just looked up Singapore and it looks to me like he will likely pay a higher percentage than Mitt paid last year. Smart. His loss.

I believe he should face a stiff tax penalty for any money he ships to Singapore, any other money he makes here would be taxed here, anyway. And, as a tax traitor, he should be barred from re-entry.

20120514-15	20:10 SteveM	Fw: This Sounds Racist to Me
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[Source of original email unknown. –SteveB]

"You old white people. It is your duty to die."

HISPANIC LEADERS SPEAK OUT

Augustin Cebada, Brown Berets: "Go back to Boston ! Go back to Plymouth Rock, Pilgrims! Get out! We are the future. You are old and tired. Go on. We have beaten you. Leave like beaten rats. You old white people. It is your duty to die. Through love of having children, we are going to take over

Richard Alatorre, Los Angeles City Council: "They're afraid we're going to take over the governmental institutions and other institutions. They're right. We will take them over . . . We are here to stay."

Excelsior, the national newspaper of Mexico: "The American Southwest seems to be slowly returning to the jurisdiction of Mexico without firing a single shot."

Professor Jose Angel Gutierrez, University of Texas: "We have an aging white America . They are not making babies. They are dying. The explosion is in our population . . . I love it. They are shitting in their pants with fear. I love it."

Art Torres, Chairman of the California Democratic Party: "Remember 187--proposition to deny taxpayer funds for services to non-citizens--was the last gasp of white America in California ."

Gloria Molina, Los Angeles County Supervisor: "We are politicizing every single one of these new citizens that are becoming citizens of this country . . . I gotta tell you that a lot of people are saying, "I'm going to go out there and vote because I want to pay them back."

Mario Obledo, California Coalition of Hispanic Organizations and California State Secretary of Health, Education and Welfare under Governor Jerry Brown, also awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom by President Bill Clinton: "California is going to be a Hispanic state. Anyone who doesn't like it should leave."

Jose Pescador Osuna, Mexican Consul General: "We are practicing 'La Reconquista' in California ..."

Professor Fernando Guerra, Loyola Marymount University: "We need to avoid a white backlash by using codes understood by Latinos . . . "

WHEN I WAS YOUNG, I remember hearing about the immigrants that came through Ellis Island They wanted to learn English. They wanted to breathe free. They wanted to become Americans. Now too many immigrants come here with demands. They demand to be taught in their own language. They demand special privileges--affirmative action. They demand ethnic studies that glorify their culture.

HOW CAN YOU HELP?: Send copies of this letter to at least two other people, 100 would be even better. Help us get the word out.

Remember when you vote next year that we need someone in the White House who will balance the budget and control illegal immigration. If we make all illegals legal, then we have lost our country forever. Liberalism will have won and you will have a one party system forever. Redistribution of wealth will be the law. It is called socialism. Our country is heading in the wrong direction and we are doing it to ourselves without serious protest.

20120514-18	21:15 SteveB	Re: This Sounds Racist to Me
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Snopes.com confirms, but greatly expands upon, the information presented here:

<http://www.snopes.com/politics/quotes/hispanicleaders.asp>.

OK...so, show me a race without racists.

More racism???????????????????

"Instant Justice for Sociopaths — Semper Justitia" by Mark Alexander, PatriotPost

May 10, 2012 (<http://patriotpost.us/alexander/2012/05/10/instant-justice-for-sociopaths-semper-justitia/#post-comment>)

Sometimes the good guys win.

"Among the natural rights [of the people] are these: first, a right to life; secondly, to liberty; thirdly to property; together with the right to support and defend them in the best manner they can." --Samuel Adams (1772)

"White Man Kills Two Unarmed Black Men"

Fortunately, that's not a real headline, but it is the type of hype that emblazons the top of the fold and 24-hour cable news spin "Special Reports."

However, after investigating a case in Onslow County (Jacksonville/Camp Lejeune), North Carolina, the district attorney made sure that justifiable self-defense did not become fodder for a media feeding frenzy sponsored by race hustlers Al Sharpton and Jesse Jackson. He did so by never mentioning the race of the victim who shot two black men. In fact, none of the Jacksonville investigators or media outlets have mentioned the race of the shooter. (How the DA achieved that media color-blind cooperation should be a case-study for every city in the nation.)

Heck, if anyone suggested this case might be spun on race, even Barack Hussein Obama might make a campaign stop in North Carolina to issue this proclamation about the two men killed: "If I had sons, they would look like Maurice Skinner and Diego Everette." (Recall that our Agitator-in-Chief brought the Zimmerman/Martin case in Florida to a national boiling point by announcing, "If I had a son, he would look like Trayvon.")

However, District Attorney Ernest R. Lee is a modest and humble man singularly devoted to Rule of Law rather than egomaniacal facetime in the national media. Thus, he chose to take the high road. In an interview, Lee told me, "Race, gender, socio-economic status -- these are not factors in this case nor should they be. What mattered was gaining a clear understanding of the facts in this case and applying the law."

Since you've likely heard nothing about this case, allow me to enlighten you.

In the early morning hours of Sunday, 15 April, two thugs burglarizing neighborhood cars decided to burglarize a house. Unknown to the perpetrators, the house is owned by a Marine from neighboring Camp Lejeune.

According to the official investigative finding of the Jacksonville Police Department, the Naval Criminal Investigative Service and the District Attorney, the Marine, who will remain unnamed, returned to his house with another Marine and a civilian friend, around 0140 Sunday after attending a birthday party and then patronizing a local club.

Upon entering his home, the Marine noted that things were not in order. As he walked toward the back of his house, Maurice Skinner, 33, stepped out and hit the Marine in the face with the butt of a Mossberg shotgun belonging to the Marine. Skinner and Diego Everette, also 33, had forced entry through the back of the house and had discovered the shotgun under a bed.

Skinner ordered the Marine and his two friends onto the floor and demanded their wallets and cell phones. Everette and Skinner told the men they would kill them if they caused any problems, but reassuringly noted that they would not shoot the Marine who was a father.

Skinner demanded duct tape and rope with which to bind the three victims.

At one point, as Skinner looked away, the Marine resident reached for the shotgun and a struggle ensued. Everette entered the room and joined the brawl, hitting the Marine and his civilian guest with a crowbar. Skinner broke loose and pointed the shotgun at the Marine saying, "You are going to die now," and squeezed the trigger. However, while the Marine resident kept the gun loaded, as a safety practice he didn't keep a round chambered. Thus, the gun did not discharge, leaving Skinner perplexed.

The Marine resident then kicked Skinner and freed the shotgun from the assailant's hands. The Marine retrieved the firearm, chambered a first round, shot Skinner and then shot Skinner again. He then moved to the other side of the room where Everette and the other Marine struggled. The Marine resident shot Everette once and then shot Everette again.

The Marine guest dialed 911 and Jacksonville police officers arrived on the scene minutes later to find perp Skinner and perp Everette deceased. The Marine, his Marine guest and the civilian all had injuries and their clothing was bloodied.

According to District Attorney Lee, "Both Everette and Skinner [had] criminal histories." Everette had numerous assault charges, but Skinner had the most serious charges including a previous felony conviction for assault. Both had served time in prison. Lee noted that neither of the Marines, nor their civilian guest, had previous criminal convictions.

Lee concluded, "Based upon my review of the facts of this case, the occupants of the residence were justified in using deadly force against both Everette and Skinner because the actions of Everette and Skinner caused the occupants to reasonably believe it necessary to use deadly force to protect their lives. The evidence shows that the occupants of the residence held a reasonable fear of imminent death or serious bodily harm to themselves and others and that both Everette and Skinner had unlawfully and forcefully entered the residence of the occupants. ... Furthermore, the general rules of self-defense and defense of others in North Carolina allow for the use of deadly force when the individual actually, or honestly, believed in the need to defend him or others from death or great bodily injury and the individual's belief is reasonable in light of the circumstances as they appeared to him at the time."

If those criteria sound familiar, it's because they are the basis for the so-called "stand your ground" laws in many states, including Florida, where evidence suggests that George Zimmerman, despite having been all but convicted by Obama, other race hustlers and the Leftmedia, may well be found to have justifiably protected himself by shooting Trayvon Martin. (If Zimmerman is not found "guilty," prepare for some inner-city turmoil.)

The editor of the *Jacksonville Daily News* concluded, "The innocent families of the two men who died, and their children in particular (of which Lee says there are nine between the two), must face the unfortunate consequences of the actions of these two men. They have been left to mourn the loss of their loved ones. The community should recognize that they, as much as anyone, are also victims. When individuals choose to break the law, they leave others behind to grieve their actions."

I certainly don't mean to spit on the graves of these two thugs, who will no longer pose a threat to anyone, but those occasions when the good guys win are worth noting. It is no small irony that this incident occurred on April 15, Tax Day. Perhaps Everette and Skinner thought they weren't getting enough of the graft from what Obama calls "redistributive justice" and were motivated by his "fairness doctrine" to redistribute wealth from another's home to their own.

Unfortunately for them, Skinner and Everette chose the residence of a gun owner, and moreover, a United States Marine. A clue to avoid this house might have been the word "Avengers" stenciled on the home's mailbox -- but they chose to use the backdoor, not the front. Indeed, life is tough, but it's even tougher when you're stupid. Likewise, life is short, but it's even shorter when you're stupid.

The day after this incident, Jacksonville PD Chief Mike Yaniero announced increased patrols in the Marine's neighborhood in order to thwart future burglaries. However, I suspect that even if there are absolutely no patrols,

the crime rate there will now be ZERO. And regarding police patrols and deadly threats, as this incident clearly demonstrates, when seconds count, law enforcement assistance is only minutes away.

20120514-20 21:47 SteveB Re: "Instant Justice for Sociopaths — Semper Justitia"

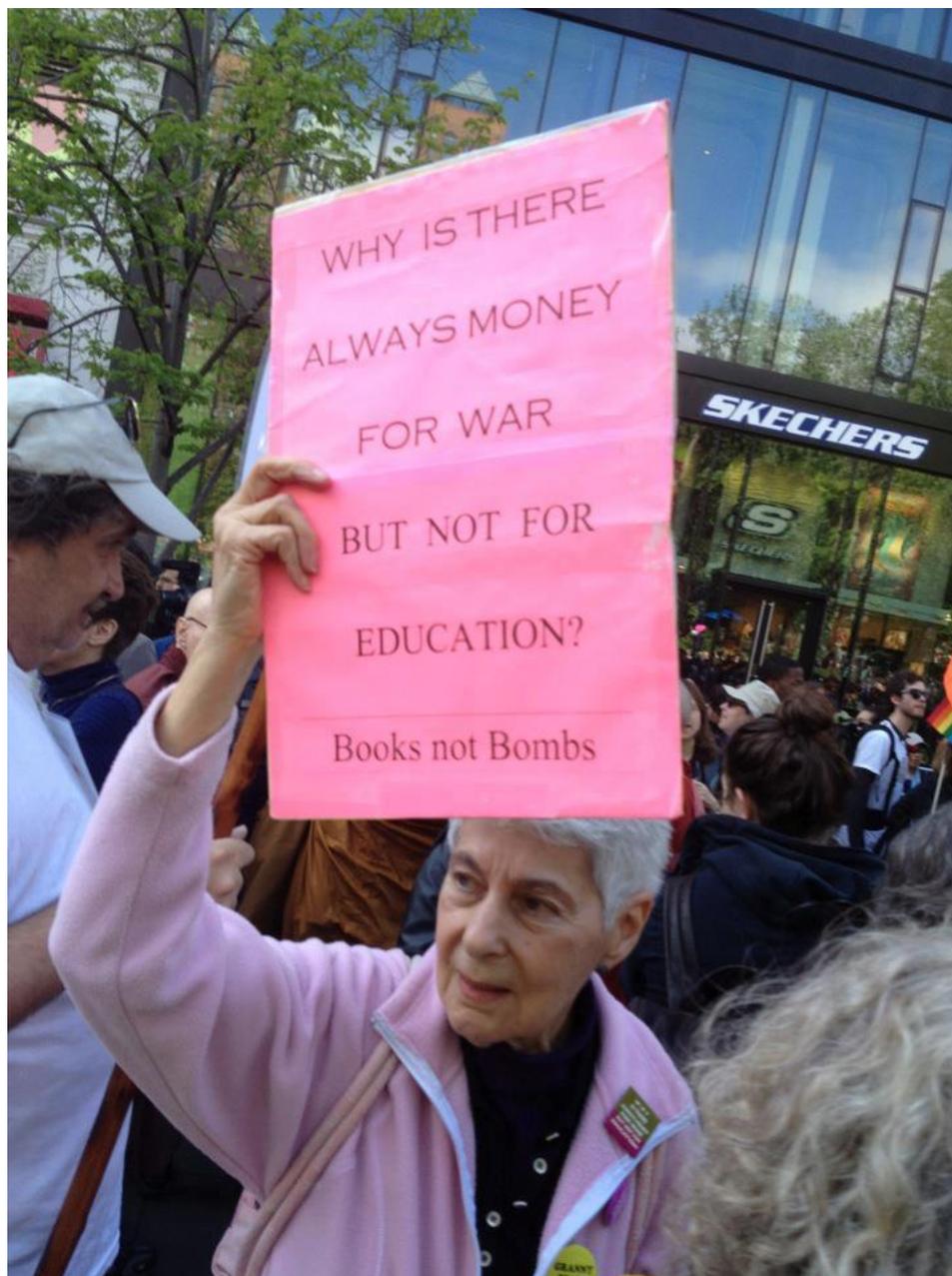
The "Leftmedia"? LOL!

I think a comment from the website where this (above) first appeared might be appropriate:

posted by LesnOfYerLif3, Posted May 14, 2012 at 2:34:15 PM

<http://patriotpost.us/alexander/2012/05/10/instant-justice-for-sociopaths-semper-justitia/#post-comment>

This was a great article - and it's very clear you're not a fan of President Obama, I just fail to see a connection to him and this situation. You mention the President in almost 3/4 of the paragraphs - it's almost like the crime and resultant justifiable homicide is a back story to the accusations and insults you throw at Obama. I would have preferred to just read the story without all your political non-sense intermixed into the plot, actions and facts you presented. It's actually sad how polarized this country has become - this President has been a moderate - even using conservative ideas to reform the health care system and you Republicans howl like he is Lenin reincarnated. I mean just come out and admit it - there was and is nothing this man could have done in office to garner your support or change your mind about him. You've clearly "drank the GOP's koolaid" so I don't expect a logical debate - I am coming from a politically moderate position and it's like you could only enjoy this article if I had similar feelings about the President because this article was more about him than the actual incident - I just felt the crime was a circumstance you used to create a much desired monologue about Barack Obama. The fact is - you share this country with many other people with many different political perspectives and if you don't want this country to crash and burn (a real patriot places the welfare of the country above political ideology), you are going to have to work with those people. "No" and "Tax cuts for the Rich" aren't a way forward and that's all we've gotten out of the Republicans lately. Before you go blaming Obama for everything wrong in your life - turn around and apply the same standards to the people you obviously vote for because they haven't exactly been "pragmatists of the first rank" either. Going back to this situation - I'm glad these criminals got their "just deserts." Most criminals get away with the vast majority of their crimes (that's why they always look so surprised when they get caught) so the chances are, this wasn't their "first rodeo." They've probably been responsible for hurting and robbing other people - call it God's justice that they picked the wrong house with the wrong person that night. The author titled this article, "sometimes the good-guys win," I would have titled it; "sometimes things work out like they should," because that's exactly what happened. In a country that seems to care more about the constitutional rights of criminals than those of the victims, we need to re-evaluate our system of justice because these guys (when they get out of prison) go right back out there to do it again and statistics show repeat offenders are more prone to violence and murder after they have been imprisoned by the state. That's a problem - our "prison industrial complex" almost does our citizens a disservice and puts them at greater risk - it clearly needs to be drastically re-envisioned (I like the idea of hard-labor and chain-gangs over the current system where these guys lay around in their racks watching Jerry Springer and Mory Povich).



Well...they would't let them build a more truthful statue with the regal monarch actually pi*sing on the people, so...

<http://www.mom.gov.sg/foreign-manpower/working-in-singapore/Pages/default.aspx>



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

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