



FRIENDS OF THE MIDDLE

AUGUST, 2012 NEWSLETTERS

Edited by Steven W. Baker for FRIENDS OF THE MIDDLE

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FRIENDS OF THE MIDDLE
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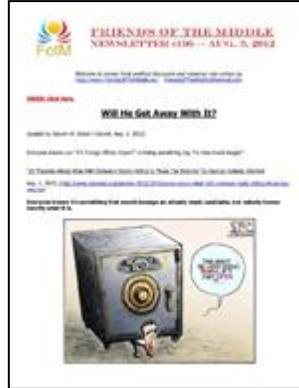
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(01-12) 2012 PRIMARIES			
(02-12) 2012 ELECTIONS			
20120817-04	11:28	SteveB	Fw: MoveOn Video: "Revealed: The GOP Strategy"
20120818-05	08:00	SteveB	'The Scam' in a Nutshell
20120818-06	08:31	Beth	Re: The 'Scam' in a Nutshell (reply to SteveB, above)
20120818-10	11:08	Pam	Re: The 'Scam' in a Nutshell (reply to SteveB & Beth, above)
20120818-11	16:19	Roy	Re: The 'Scam' in a Nutshell (reply to SteveB, above)
20120819-01	11:08	SteveB	Re: The 'Scam' in a Nutshell (reply to Roy, above)
20120819-03	11:57	Susette	Re: The 'Scam' in a Nutshell (reply to SteveB, above)
20120819-04	12:10	Pam	Re: The 'Scam' in a Nutshell (reply to Susette, above)
20120819-16	20:24	SteveB	Re: The 'Scam' in a Nutshell (reply to Susette, above)
20120819-05	12:33	SteveG	Re: The 'Scam' in a Nutshell (reply to all, above)
20120819-07	13:39	Art	Re: The 'Scam' in a Nutshell (reply to all, above)
20120819-08	13:55	SteveG	Re: The 'Scam' in a Nutshell (reply to Art, above)
20120819-09	13:59	Pam	Re: The 'Scam' in a Nutshell (reply to Art, above)
20120819-11	17:23	Roy	Re: The 'Scam' in a Nutshell (reply to SteveB, above)
20120821-00		SteveB	The Truth Starts to Be Told by Steven W. Baker / SteveB ("Paul Krugman Bashes Niall Ferguson's <i>Newsweek</i> Cover Story as 'Unethical'" & "Obama on Romney Welfare Accusations: 'You Can't Just Make Stuff Up'" & "Todd Akin Piers Morgan Interview Fail: Embattled Senate Candidate Bails on CNN Host")
20120821-07	13:53	Dale	"Romney Slightly Ahead in Wisconsin"
20120821-11	15:36	SteveB	Re: "Romney Slightly Ahead in Wisconsin" (reply to Dale, above)
20120821-16	15:55	Dale	Re: "Romney Slightly Ahead in Wisconsin" (reply to SteveB, above)
20120821-10	15:22	Pam	Re: "Romney Slightly Ahead in Wisconsin" (reply to Dale, above)
20120821-12	15:39	SteveB	Re: "Romney Slightly Ahead in Wisconsin" (reply to Pam, above)
20120821-20	18:29	Art	Re: "Romney Slightly Ahead in Wisconsin" (reply to Dale, above)
20120821-21	19:16	SteveB	Re: "Romney Slightly Ahead in Wisconsin" (reply to Art & Dale, above)
20120821-22	19:36	Pam	Re: "Romney Slightly Ahead in Wisconsin" (reply to all, above)
20120824-01	07:06	MarthaH	"Press Coverage of the Character of the Candidates Is Highly Negative & Neither Obama nor Romney Has an Edge"
20120825-02	05:35	SteveB	"American Exceptionalism: The 2012 GOP Platform"
20120827-04	15:49	SteveB	"George W. Bush as Hurricane Isaac"
20120829-09	14:54	SteveG	"Fact Check: Christie's Keynote Address"
BARACK OBAMA			
20120731-06	20:16	SteveM	Charts on the Obama Years — Part 1
20120731-08	20:17	SteveM	Fw: Barry...
20120731-09	23:59	SteveB	Re: Barry... (reply to SteveM, above) & Photo: Does Mitt Get High Like Barry Used To?
20120802-02	11:28	SteveM	"Could 2012 Be America's Last Presidential Election?"
20120802-04	14:12	SteveB	Re: "Could 2012 Be America's Last Presidential Election?" (reply to SteveM, above)
20120802-06	16:01	SteveM	Re: "Could 2012 Be America's Last Presidential Election?" (reply to SteveB, above)
20120802-08	22:45	SteveB	Re: "Could 2012 Be America's Last Presidential Election?" (reply to SteveM, above)

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20120802-03	13:56	SteveB	From the Right: "Obama's Signature Move: Unsealing Private Records"
20120803-03	11:27	SteveM	Graphic: Obamamagic #1
20120806-09	23:57	SteveM	Graphic: Obamamagic #2
20120803-04	11:57	SteveM	Re: "Could 2012 Be America's Last Presidential Election?" (reply to SteveB, FotM Newsletter #196)
20120803-05	14:24	SteveB	Re: "Could 2012 Be America's Last Presidential Election?" (reply to SteveM, above)
20120805-10	11:48	SteveM	Fw: Letter to President Obama from Charlie Daniels (to SteveB)
20120805-25	23:07	Tom	Graphic: You Ar Dun
20120807-01	11:31	SteveM	"Obama's Success Schizophrenia"
20120807-02	11:55	SteveB	Re: "Obama's Success Schizophrenia" (reply to SteveM, above)
20120807-06	14:30	SteveM	Fw: Lying Socialist Thieves
20120807-07	15:34	SteveB	Re: Lying Socialist Thieves (reply to SteveM, above)
20120807-09	16:18	SteveM	Re: Lying Socialist Thieves (reply to SteveB, above)
20120807-11	17:50	SteveB	Re: Lying Socialist Thieves (reply to SteveM, above)
20120807-19	21:51	Art	Re: Lying Socialist Thieves (reply to all, above)
20120807-20	22:00	Tom	Re: Lying Socialist Thieves (reply to Art, above)
20120808-08	13:45	Art	Re: Lying Socialist Thieves (reply to Tom, FotM Newsletter #199)
20120807-21	23:58	SteveG	Graphic: 25 Middle Class & Small Business Tax Cuts from the Democrats
20120808-19	21:31	SteveM	Graphic: What You Never See on TV #1
20120809-02	13:12	SteveM	"Obama Campaign Aide Accused of Lying Over Anti-Romney Ad, Ties to Steelworker"
20120809-03	15:35	SteveB	Re: "Obama Campaign Aide Accused of Lying Over Anti-Romney Ad, Ties to Steelworker" (reply to SteveM, above) & "The Scandal Behind Romney's New Attack Ad"
20120809-04	15:56	SteveM	Re: "Obama Campaign Aide Accused of Lying..." etc. (reply to SteveB, above) & Video: "Dennis Prager Q & A at University of Denver"
20120812-14	22:26	Tom	Cartoon: Peers into the Future
20120813-02	10:13	SteveM	Fw: Coil of Rage
20120813-03	10:14	SteveB	Re: Coil of Rage (reply to SteveM, above)
20120813-08	16:41	SteveM	Video: Michelle Obama's "All This for a Damn Flag" Shown at Three Different Speeds
20120813-09	17:37	SteveB	Re Video: Michelle Obama's 'All This for a Damn Flag'... (reply to SteveM, above)
20120813-14	21:13	SteveG	Graphic: FOX: Yellow Snow Is Good for You
20120814-01	10:02	Art	"An Open Letter to the People Who Hate Obama More Than They Love America"
20120814-03	10:29	SteveM	Fw: They Want What???
20120814-09	13:23	SteveB	Re: They Want What??? (reply to SteveM, above)
20120814-13	15:49	SteveM	Fw: Graphic: It Is Up to the Voters
20120815-05	10:40	Art	Re: Graphic: It Is Up to the Voters (FotM Newsletter #204)
20120814-21	22:52	SteveG	"Who Is the Smallest Government Spender Since Eisenhower? Would You Believe It's Barack Obama?"
20120815-03	07:21	Tom	Graphic: Vote for 'Cobra Commander'
20120816-02	11:19	Art	Video: "One Term More"
20120817-05	14:21	SteveG	"Obama Better for World Economy: Poll"
20120819-14	19:42	SteveM	Fw: Photo: Just Relax!
20120819-15	20:19	SteveB	Re: Photo: Just Relax! (reply to SteveM, above) & Cartoon: R0mney Running from Romneycare
20120820-10	16:31	SteveM	Video: "Hit the Road, Barack" & Laundry List of Obama's Failures
20120820-12	17:10	SteveB	Re: Laundry List of Obama's Failures (reply to SteveM, above)
20120820-13	17:30	SteveM	Re: Laundry List of Obama's Failures (reply to SteveB, above)
20120820-16	19:35	SteveB	Re: Laundry List of Obama's Failures (reply to SteveM, above)
20120820-19	21:29	SteveM	Re: Laundry List of Obama's Failures (reply to SteveB, above)

DATE-ID	TIME	FROM	SUBJECT/TITLE
20120820-20	22:17	SteveB	Re: Laundry List of Obama's Failures (reply to SteveM, above)
20120821-05	10:37	SteveM	Re: Laundry List of Obama's Failures (reply to SteveB, FotM Newsletter #208)
20120821-06	12:36	SteveB	Re: Laundry List of Obama's Failures (reply to SteveM, above)
20120821-17	15:56	SteveM	Re: Laundry List of Obama's Failures (reply to SteveB, above)
20120820-14	17:32	SteveM	Fw: Obama's Daughters are 'Senior Staffers' & "Judicial Watch Obtains Documents Detailing the Cost to Taxpayers for Michelle Obama's Family Trip to Africa"
20120820-17	19:49	SteveB	Re: Obama's Daughters are 'Senior Staffers' (reply to SteveM, above)
20120821-31	23:30	SteveB	Re: Obama's Daughters are 'Senior Staffers' (reply to SteveM, FotM Newsletter #208)
20120821-26	22:34	SteveM	Fw: The Eagle Is Gone
20120821-27	22:37	SteveM	Video: Steve Bridges as President Obama
20120821-32	23:42	SteveB	Re: Steve Bridges as President Obama (reply to SteveM, above)
20120821-29	23:10	Tom	Cartoon: New Black Panthers 2012
20120821-33	23:54	SteveB	Re: Cartoon: New Black Panthers 2012 (reply to Tom, above)
20120822-14	22:58	SteveM	You Always Have Something to Say...
20120823-09	15:38	Art	Re: You Always Have Something to Say... (reply to SteveM, FotM Newsletter #210)
20120823-13	16:03	SteveB	Re: You Always Have Something to Say... (reply to Art, above)
20120823-24	19:16	Art	Re: You Always Have Something to Say... (reply to SteveB, above)
20120823-25	19:37	SteveB	Re: You Always Have Something to Say... (reply to Art, above)
20120822-15	23:02	SteveM	"Obama: Like a Banana-Republic Despot"
20120822-17	23:08	SteveM	"Why Is Michelle Obama so Tired?"
20120823-03	12:11	SteveM	Fw: Photo: Special Republican Interstate Highway
20120823-04	12:24	Art	Fw: From the Right: Obama Stops Soldier from Speaking
20120823-20	16:51	MarthaH	"Texas Democrats: Judge Who Said Obama Could Trigger Civil War Should Quit"
20120823-26	20:37	Pam	Re: "Texas Democrats: Judge Who Said Obama Could Trigger Civil War Should Quit" (reply to MarthaH, above)
20120823-23	19:00	Art	Re: "Texas Democrats: Judge Who Said Obama Could Trigger Civil War Should Quit" (reply to MarthaH, above)
20120823-27	20:42	Pam	Re: "Texas Democrats: Judge Who Said Obama Could Trigger Civil War Should Quit" (reply to Art, above)
20120823-28	22:33	SteveB	Re: "Texas Democrats: Judge Who Said Obama Could Trigger Civil War Should Quit" (reply to Pam, above)
20120823-29	23:50	MarthaH	Re: "Texas Democrats: Judge Who Said Obama Could Trigger Civil War Should Quit" (reply to SteveB, above)
20120823-30	23:55	SteveB	Re: "Texas Democrats: Judge Who Said Obama Could Trigger Civil War Should Quit" (reply to MarthaH, above)
20120824-03	9:05	Pam	Re: "Texas Democrats: Judge Who Said Obama Could Trigger Civil War Should Quit" (reply to MarthaH, FotM Newsletter #211)
20120824-05	10:32	SteveG	From the Right: Fw: WAKE UP, AMERICA!!!
20120826-16	15:41	SteveB	Re: WAKE UP, AMERICA!!! (reply to SteveG, above)
20120825-04	08:26	SandyI	Fw: Obama Punching Bag
20120825-06	08:49	Pam	Re: Obama Punching Bag (reply to SandyI, above)
20120829-28	20:45	SteveM	Graphic: Here's How Stupid Obama Is!
20120829-29	20:51	SteveB	Re: Here's How Stupid Obama Is! (reply to SteveM, above)
20120829-30	21:05	SteveM	Re: Here's How Stupid Obama Is! (reply to SteveB, above)
20120829-31	22:16	SteveB	Re: Here's How Stupid Obama Is! (reply to SteveM, above)
20120830-06	16:22	SteveM	Video: "Actor Compares Obama to Hugo Chavez"

MITT ROMNEY

<u>DATE-ID</u>	<u>TIME</u>	<u>FROM</u>	<u>SUBJECT/TITLE</u>
20120801-00		Art & SteveG	R0mney Praises Socialized Health Care by Art Hotop & SteveG ("Romney Praises Health Care in Israel, Where Research Says 'Strong Government Influence' Has Driven Down Costs")
20120801-01	06:01	SteveB	Re: R0mney Praises Socialized Health Care (FotM Newsletter #194)
20120801-05	18:05	Art	"Study: Romney Tax Plan Would Result in Cuts for Rich, Higher Burden for Others"
20120801-06	18:48	SteveB	"Reckless Romney"
20120803-00		SteveB	Will He Get Away With It? by Steven W. Baker / SteveB ("10 Theories About What Mitt Romney's Really Hiding in Those Tax Returns")
20120802-01	11:20	SteveG	Romney's Taxes and the Olympics
20120804-01	05:55	SteveG	Graphic: R0mney's World vs. the Real World
20120804-03	06:50	SteveB	"Rep. Walter Jones on Mitt Romney's Tax Returns: 'I Don't Think This Will Go Away'"
20120804-04	07:06	SteveB	"Mitt R0mney: 'I Have Paid Taxes Every Year. A Lot of Taxes.'"
20120804-10	18:00	SteveB	"A Philosophical Question on Romney's Tax Returns"
20120804-06	16:32	SteveB	Vetting Mittens?
20120804-11	18:46	SteveM	Re: Vetting Mittens? (reply to SteveB, above)
20120805-02	05:46	SteveB	Re: Vetting Mittens? (reply to SteveM, above)
20120805-07	11:09	SteveM	Re: Vetting Mittens? (reply to SteveB, above)
20120805-13	13:37	Art	Re: Vetting Mittens? (reply to all, above)
20120805-15	14:09	SteveG	Re: Vetting Mittens? (reply to all, above)
20120804-08	17:04	SteveB	"How Mitt Romney Got Rich Destroying American Jobs & Promoting Sweatshop Capitalism"
20120805-01	05:12	SteveB	"Mitt Romney: 'Federal Reserve Should Avoid Stimulus'"
20120807-00		SteveB	R0mney: 1 + 1 = 3! by Steven W. Baker / SteveB ("The Romney Tax Hike")
20120808-00		SteveB	The 'Shapeshifter' by Steven W. Baker / SteveB ("The Talented Mr. Romney")
20120807-08	15:58	SteveB	'Put up or shut up'??? GET SERIOUS!
20120807-10	16:57	SteveM	Re: 'Put up or shut up'??? GET SERIOUS! (reply to SteveB, above)
20120807-13	17:58	SteveB	Re: 'Put up or shut up'??? GET SERIOUS! (reply to SteveM, above)
20120807-12	17:50	Art	Re: 'Put up or shut up'??? GET SERIOUS! (reply to SteveB, above)
20120807-14	18:24	SteveB	Re: 'Put up or shut up'??? GET SERIOUS! (reply to Art, above)
20120807-15	18:53	Ben	Re: 'Put up or shut up'??? GET SERIOUS! (reply to SteveB, above)
20120807-17	21:15	SteveB	Re: 'Put up or shut up'??? GET SERIOUS! (reply to Ben, above)
20120807-16	19:30	Art	Re: 'Put up or shut up'??? GET SERIOUS! (reply to SteveB, above)
20120807-18	21:18	SteveB	Re: 'Put up or shut up'??? GET SERIOUS! (reply to Art, above)
20120808-10	16:21	SteveB	"Another Bad Day for R0mney"
20120810-00		SteveB	Mitt the Tax Cheater? by Steven W. Baker / SteveB ("Obama Campaign Ad Speculates Mitt Romney Might Have Paid Nothing in Taxes" & "Did Romney Enable a Company's Abusive Tax Shelter?")
20120809-09	19:59	SteveB	"Obama Leads Romney by 7 Points as Negative Ads Take Toll"
20120809-10	20:15	SteveB	"Shouldn't Mitt Romney Be Ahead by Now?"
20120809-11	20:29	SteveM	Re: "Shouldn't Mitt Romney Be Ahead by Now?" (reply to SteveB, above)
20120809-12	21:33	SteveB	Re: "Shouldn't Mitt Romney Be Ahead by Now?" (reply to SteveM, above)
20120809-13	21:38	SteveB	Re: "Shouldn't Mitt Romney Be Ahead by Now?" (reply to SteveM, above)
20120810-05	18:24	SteveB	"Mitt Romney & the Return of the Repressed"
20120811-01	06:38	SteveB	"If Mitt Romney Is Going to Lose, He's Going to Lose Ugly"
20120812-04	06:57	SteveB	"Mitt Romney: Paul Ryan Budget Is Not His, Candidate 'Putting Together His Own'"

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20120812-12	16:12	Art	Re: "Mitt Romney: Paul Ryan Budget Is Not His, Candidate 'Putting Together His Own'" (reply to SteveB, above)
20120813-16	21:26	SteveG	"Romney Declines to Say Where He Disagrees with Ryan on the Budget"
20120815-00		SteveB	America Doesn't Like Mitt R0mney by Steven W. Baker / SteveB ("Why America Doesn't Like Mitt Romney")
20120815-06	10:44	Susette	Re: America Doesn't Like Mitt R0mney (reply to SteveB, FotM Newsletter #204)
20120815-07	11:25	SteveB	Re: America Doesn't Like Mitt R0mney (reply to Susette, above)
20120816-01	09:06	Susette	Re: America Doesn't Like Mitt R0mney (reply to SteveB, FotM Newsletter #205)
20120814-15	16:21	SteveB	"Mitt Romney Campaign Launches First Medicare TV Ad Salvo"
20120814-16	16:58	SteveB	"Florida Newspapers: Romney Is in Big, Big Trouble"
20120814-18	19:46	SteveG	Cartoon: R0mney-Ryan Disdain for the Middle Class & Seniors
20120814-23	23:58	SteveG	Quote: R0mney Supporter: What the 1% Really Think
20120816-00		SteveB	The Doublespeak Twins — Big R & Little R by Steven W. Baker / SteveB ("Railroaded")
20120815-09	13:24	SteveB	FINALLY! MITT ROMNEY'S TAX RETURNS POSTED ONLINE!
20120815-14	15:18	Ben	Re: FINALLY! MITT ROMNEY'S TAX RETURNS POSTED ONLINE! (reply to SteveB, above)
20120816-18	22:04	Ann	Fw: Graphics: Spelling Matters
20120818-03	07:17	SteveB	"Mitt Romney's 2010 Tax Disclosure May Be Lacking 'Unrelated Business' Form"
20120821-09	15:03	SteveB	"The Five Reasons Why the Ryan-Romney Economic Plan Would Be a Disaster for America"
20120822-02	10:45	SteveB	"Why Romney's Poll Numbers Are Falling Fast"
20120822-03	10:56	Pam	Re: "Why Romney's Poll Numbers Are Falling Fast" (reply to SteveB, above)
20120822-05	11:19	SteveB	Re: "Why Romney's Poll Numbers Are Falling Fast" (reply to Pam, above)
20120822-06	11:47	Ben	Re: "Why Romney's Poll Numbers Are Falling Fast" (reply to SteveB, above)
20120824-00		SteveB	Bain in the A*s! by Steven W. Baker / SteveB ("Romney Tax Return Provides a Window to His Soul" & "Romney's Albatross")
20120823-07	13:54	SteveB	"Bain Documents Released by Gawker"
20120823-10	15:50	SteveG	"The Bain Files: Inside Mitt Romney's Tax-Dodging Cayman Schemes"
20120823-11	15:53	SteveG	Re: "The Bain Files..." (to SteveB)
20120823-15	16:08	SteveB	Re: "The Bain Files..." (reply to SteveG, above)
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20120825-09	15:04	SteveG	"How Romney's \$Millions Went Tax-Free Overseas"
20120826-02	06:03	SteveB	"Mitt Romney Reaped Huge Tax Benefits Based on 'Active' Role at Bain Capital"
20120824-06	11:19	SteveB	Video: Robert Reich Explains The Romney-Ryan Economic Plan
20120825-03	06:02	SteveB	"Four Laughable Explanations for Mitt Romney's Birther Joke"
20120827-06	17:32	SteveG	"Chris Matthews Accuses Romney of Playing 'Race Card'"
20120825-05	08:33	SteveB	"Romney's Lying Machine"
20120827-01	08:35	SteveB	"I Didn't Write This"
20120827-08	17:52	SteveB	Fw: MoveOn Action: "Stepping on the Middle Class" (30-Second TV Ad)
20120827-12	21:52	SteveB	Cartoon: Wooden Man
20120829-00		SteveG	We ALL Built It, Not Just You, Mitt R0mney! by SteveG ("The Secret Weapon: All of Us")
20120830-00		SteveB	A Campaign Built on 'Big Lies' Not 'Big Ideas' by Steven W. Baker / SteveB ("Paul Ryan Address: Convention Speech Built on Demonstrably Misleading Assertions")

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20120829-07	13:13	SteveG	"Lying for the Lord"
20120829-13	15:06	Pam	Re: "Lying for the Lord" (reply to SteveG, above)
20120829-14	15:10	Dennis	Re: "Lying for the Lord" (reply to Pam, above)
20120829-15	15:15	Pam	Re: "Lying for the Lord" (reply to Dennis, above)
20120829-19	18:14	SteveB	Re: "Lying for the Lord" (reply to Pam & Dennis, above)
20120829-21	18:31	Dennis	Re: "Lying for the Lord" (reply to SteveB, above)
20120829-22	19:55	Art	Re: "Lying for the Lord" (reply to SteveB, above)
20120829-23	20:22	SteveB	Re: "Lying for the Lord" (reply to Art, above)
20120829-24	20:26	SteveG	Re: "Lying for the Lord" (reply to SteveB, above)
20120829-25	20:39	Pam	Re: "Lying for the Lord" (reply to SteveG, above)
20120829-26	20:42	SteveB	Re: "Lying for the Lord" (reply to SteveG & Pam, above)
20120830-01	11:46	Dennis	Re: "Lying for the Lord" (reply to SteveB, FotM Newsletter #215) & "The Real Science Behind Scientology"
20120830-02	13:40	Pam	Re: "Lying for the Lord" (reply to Dennis, above)
20120830-18	20:38	Bill	Re: "Lying for the Lord" (reply to Pam, above)
20120830-13	18:33	Art	Re: "Lying for the Lord" (reply to Dennis, above)
20120829-27	20:44	SteveM	Fw: Why Mitt R0mney Is Unlikable!
20120831-00		Dennis	Greed! by Dennis ("Greed and Debt: The True Story of Mitt Romney and Bain Capital")
20120830-03	14:15	Pam	Re: Greed! (reply to Dennis, above)
20120830-20	22:34	Bill	Re: Greed! (reply to Pam & Dennis, above)
20120830-04	15:24	SteveB	Re: Greed! (reply to Dennis, above)
20120830-05	16:08	Clark	Re: Greed! (reply to Dennis, above)
20120830-09	17:10	Colin	Re: Greed! (reply to Dennis, above)
20120830-14	18:45	Art	Re: Greed! (reply to Dennis, above)
20120830-10	17:39	SteveG	Graphic: Ordinary Mitt
20120830-15	18:51	Art	Re: Graphic: Ordinary Mitt (reply to SteveG, above)
PAUL RYAN			
20120813-00		SteveB	R0mney's VP Pick: Paul Ryan by Steven W. Baker / SteveB ("Paul Ryan? Seriously?")
20120811-03	09:13	FotM	Re: R0mney's VP Pick: Paul Ryan (reply to SteveB, above & FotM Group Discussion)
20120811-15	18:50	SteveG	"12 Things You Should Know About Vice Presidential Candidate Paul Ryan"
20120811-16	18:51	SteveG	"Glenn's Soulmate?" (Interview with Paul Ryan)
20120811-18	20:26	SteveB	Re: "Glenn's Soulmate?" (reply to SteveG, above)
20120811-21	21:35	SteveG	"How Noodling Works"
20120812-09	12:33	SteveB	"The Ryan Choice"
20120813-15	21:15	SteveG	Graphic: Paul Ryan — Voted ' Biggest Brown-Noser ' in His HS Class [I guess some things never change! -SteveB]
20120813-19	23:20	SteveG	Cartoon: Paul Ryan: Devil or Boy Scout?
20120813-21	23:55	SteveB	"Paul Ryan's Voting Record: Big-Spending Conservatism"
20120814-02	10:17	MarthaH	"Ryan Scores Lowest Poll Numbers Since Quayle"
20120814-14	15:32	SteveB	Graphic: "10 Things The Romney Campaign Doesn't Want You To Know About Paul Ryan"
20120815-08	12:05	SteveG	"Selfishness as Virtue: The Narcissistic Politics of Paul Ryan"
20120817-06	15:06	SteveG	"Paul Ryan's Skeleton in the Closet"
20120817-07	15:46	SteveG	"Ryan Is a 'Dream Come True' for Health Insurance Industry"
20120821-18	16:06	SteveM	"Our Next Vice President?"
20120826-06	07:59	Dennis	"Does Paul Ryan Know What's in His Budget?"

<u>DATE-ID</u>	<u>TIME</u>	<u>FROM</u>	<u>SUBJECT/TITLE</u>
20120826-09	11:02	Art	Re: "Does Paul Ryan Know What's in His Budget?" (reply to Dennis, above) & "Five Myths About Paul Ryan's Budget"
20120830-07	16:43	SteveB	"Fox News' Sally Kohn: Paul Ryan's RNC Speech 'Was Attempt to Set World Record for Blatant Lies'"
20120830-12	18:13	SteveB	Fw: MoveOn Petition: Demand That Media Report Lies!
20120830-16	19:27	SteveB	"Lyin' Ryan: All the Media Pushback"
(03) CONSERVATIVE MIND, THE			
20120802-07	17:57	SteveB	"Libelous Big Lies About Liberals"
20120805-09	11:28	SteveG	The Tea Party's Constitutional Issues
20120805-12	12:45	SteveB	Re: The Tea Party's Constitutional Issues (reply to SteveG, above) & "So What is The Plan?"
20120805-16	14:15	SteveG	Re: The Tea Party's Constitutional Issues (reply to SteveB, above)
20120805-17	15:00	Art	Re: The Tea Party's Constitutional Issues (reply to SteveG, above)
20120805-18	15:37	SteveG	Re: The Tea Party's Constitutional Issues (reply to Art, above)
20120805-19	16:08	SteveB	Re: The Tea Party's Constitutional Issues (reply to SteveG, above)
20120805-20	16:42	SteveG	Re: The Tea Party's Constitutional Issues (reply to SteveB, above)
20120805-21	17:14	SteveB	Re: The Tea Party's Constitutional Issues (reply to SteveG, above)
20120805-22	17:51	SteveG	Re: The Tea Party's Constitutional Issues (reply to SteveB, above)
20120805-08	11:21	SteveM	Fw: 12 Reasons People Vote Democrat
20120807-05	12:43	Tom	Fw: "Service"
20120810-01	04:56	Dick	Fw: The Night Watchman
20120810-02	05:14	SteveB	Re: The Night Watchman (reply to Dick, above)
20120810-03	09:33	Dick	Re: The Night Watchman (reply to SteveB, above)
20120813-05	13:12	SteveM	"Government vs. Prosperity"
20120813-06	14:20	SteveB	Re: "Government vs. Prosperity" (reply to SteveM, above)
20120816-04	13:05	SteveB	From the Right: "Why Liberals Behave the Way They Do"
20120816-15	18:11	SteveB	From the Right: "U.S. Chamber Calls Elizabeth Warren Greatest Threat to Free Enterprise"
20120816-06	14:33	SteveBA	Fw: Joke: Talk with Daughter
20120817-02	09:46	SteveG	Re: Joke: Talk with Daughter (reply to SteveBA, FotM newsletter #206)
20120820-07	15:21	SteveB	"Facts, Huh! What Are They Good For? Absolutely Nothing."
20120824-09	19:35	SteveM	Fw: Thank God That Godless Castro Didn't Destroy America [Instead, It Was the Godless Dollar! -SteveB]
20120824-11	20:17	SteveB	Re: Thank God That Godless Castro Didn't Destroy America (reply to SteveM, above)
20120825-16	18:09	SteveG	"Akin for the Truth: How Are US Religious Fundamentalists Any Different Than Middle Eastern Ones?"
20120826-03	06:35	SteveB	"The Fountainhead"
20120827-03	14:33	Art	Delusions
20120827-07	17:42	SteveB	Re: Delusions (reply to Art, above)
20120827-09	20:03	Pam	Re: Delusions (reply to Art & SteveB, above)
20120827-11	21:31	SteveG	Re: Delusions (reply to Pam, above)
20120827-13	22:48	Art	Re: Delusions (reply to Pam, above)
20120828-01	08:56	Pam	Re: Delusions (reply to SteveG, FotM Newsletter #213)
20120828-07	10:40	SteveG	Re: Delusions (reply to SteveB, FotM Newsletter #213)
20120828-05	10:34	Art	Re: Delusions (reply to SteveB, FotM Newsletter #213)
20120828-08	10:45	Pam	Re: Delusions (reply to Art, above)
20120828-09	10:51	Art	Re: Delusions (reply to Pam, above)
20120828-02	09:04	SteveG	"The Not-So-Social Gospel"
20120828-03	09:18	Pam	Re: "The Not-So-Social Gospel" (reply to SteveG, above)
20120828-04	09:57	Art	Re: "The Not-So-Social Gospel" (reply to SteveG, above)

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20120830-21	22:57	SteveB	"Strange, Very Strange, Dangerously Strange"
(04) DEMOCRATS			
(05) LIBERAL MIND, THE			
20120731-01	15:56	SteveG	Video: "What's the Difference Between 'Liberal' and 'Conservative'?"
20120806-08	17:34	Art	Video: British Defense Planning
20120806-10	23:58	SteveG	Graphic: Drug Testing for Gun Owners
20120811-04	12:41	SteveB	"America's Deficit Attention Disorder"
20120812-06	09:43	SteveB	The Blatant Truth
20120812-11	16:09	Beth	Re: The Blatant Truth (reply to SteveB, above)
20120812-15	23:58	Art	Re: The Blatant Truth (reply to SteveB, above)
20120823-12	15:55	SteveG	"The Fascinating Differences Between the Conservative & Liberal Personality"
20120823-22	18:46	Art	Re: "The Fascinating Differences Between the Conservative & Liberal Personality" (reply to SteveG, above)
20120823-17	16:23	Pam	Re: "The Fascinating Differences Between the Conservative & Liberal Personality" (reply to SteveG, above)
20120823-19	16:42	SteveB	Re: "The Fascinating Differences Between the Conservative & Liberal Personality" (reply to Pam, above)
(06) MISC. POLITICS / CORRESPONDENCE w/ POLITICIANS			
20120808-12	18:04	Dennis	"A Devil's Dictionary"
20120808-15	18:05	SteveB	Re: "A Devil's Dictionary" (reply to Dennis, above)
20120821-24	21:54	SteveG	Book: <i>The Parties Versus the People: How to Turn Republicans & Democrats into Americans</i>
20120821-25	21:57	SteveG	Video Interview: "Mickey Edwards Urges Congress, Before Party Affiliation Be 'an American First'"
(07) REPUBLICANS			
20120802-09	23:57	SteveG	Graphic: Cooperation
20120803-01	08:04	SteveB	Disclosure
20120803-06	14:56	Pam	Re: Disclosure (reply to SteveB, above)
20120804-05	13:54	SteveB	"When Did the GOP Become the Whiners?"
20120806-02	11:59	SteveB	"Five Adjectives that Scream 'Don't Vote Republican!'"
20120806-04	12:05	SteveB	From the Right: "Five Reasons Republicans Can Win the Tax Fight"
20120807-03	12:19	SteveM	"2012: America's Last Free Election?"
20120807-04	12:41	SteveB	Re: "2012: America's Last Free Election?" (reply to SteveM, above) & "The Grand Old Party's Breaking Up"
20120808-20	23:58	SteveG	Quote: Lindsey Graham on Avoiding Paying Taxes
20120811-13	15:33	SteveG	"How Grover Norquist Hypnotized the GOP"
20120811-14	18:42	SteveG	Republicans Will Destroy the USA to keep It GOP
20120811-17	18:52	Art	Re: Republicans Will Destroy the USA to keep It GOP (reply to SteveG, above)
20120811-19	20:41	SteveB	Photo: REPUBLICAN CANNIBALS!
20120812-07	10:01	SteveBA	Re: REPUBLICAN CANNIBALS! (reply to SteveB, above)
20120812-08	10:49	SteveB	Re: REPUBLICAN CANNIBALS! (reply to SteveBA, above)
20120812-10	15:33	Art	Re: REPUBLICAN CANNIBALS! (reply to SteveBA, above)
20120811-20	20:53	SteveB	Graphic: 'Hand Me the Vaginal Probe, Rick.'
20120816-17	20:22	SteveG	"The Big Lie of the Day: Republicans Balance Federal Budgets"

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20120820-00		SteveB	Legitimately Stupid by Steven W. Baker / SteveB ("Todd Akin on Abortion: 'Legitimate Rape' Victims Have 'Ways to Try to Shut That Whole Thing Down'" & "Paul Ryan Got Federal Funds to Help with Bush-Era GM Plant Closure He Blames on Obama")
20120817-08	21:44	SteveG	Where is Boehner?
20120818-01	05:48	SteveB	Re: Where is Boehner? (reply to SteveG, above)
20120818-02	06:14	SteveG	Re: Where is Boehner? (reply to SteveB, above)
20120818-04	07:47	SteveB	Re: Where is Boehner? (reply to SteveG, above)
20120818-07	09:50	Art	Re: Where is Boehner? (reply to SteveG & SteveB, above)
20120822-00		SteveB	God vs. the GOP? by Steven W. Baker / SteveB ("Signs of Divine Intervention for Republicans?")
20120823-05	12:48	SteveB	"The Fanatical GOP"
20120824-10	20:04	SteveB	"My New Rule for Todd Akin and the Republican Party"
20120829-05	11:17	Art	"GOP Platform Through the Years Shows Party's Shift from Moderate to Conservative"
20120829-10	14:54	Pam	Re: "GOP Platform Through the Years..." (reply to Art, above)
20120829-06	12:35	SteveB	"Welcome to GOP Nutland!"
20120829-32	23:58	SteveG	Graphic: Ronald Reagan vs. the Tea Party
20120830-08	17:03	Dennis	Graphic: Amazing! GOP Takes Credit for National Debt
(08) STATE / LOCAL POLITICS			
(09) THIRD PARTIES			
(10) CONSTITUTION			
20120805-04	07:55	SteveB	Proposed Constitutional Amendment: NO SECRET MONEY!
20120808-04	08:44	NormF	Re: Proposed Constitutional Amendment: NO SECRET MONEY! (reply to SteveB, FotM Newsletter #197)
20120815-18	23:58	SteveG	Graphic: The American Government Is Not Founded upon Christianity
20120828-16	21:37	SteveG	"Church Can't Collect Ref. 74 Donations"
20120829-01	08:53	Pam	Re: "Church Can't Collect Ref. 74 Donations" (reply to SteveG, FotM Newsletter #214)
20120829-04	10:51	Art	Re: "Church Can't Collect Ref. 74 Donations" (reply to Pam, above)
20120828-17	23:58	SteveG	Graphics: Church & State
(11) CORRUPTION			
20120810-06	18:30	SteveB	"The Justice Department Seems Incapable of Making Cases Against Wall Street"
20120813-17	22:59	SteveG	Graphics: The Corruption of Politics by Money
20120820-08	15:59	SteveG	"GOP Consultant: Koch Brothers Bought Ryan's Nomination with \$100 Million Promise"
20120824-02	07:24	MarthaH	"Who Are the Kochs & How Far Does Their Influence Reach?" & "Koch Brothers' Non-Profit Hits the Ground in Swing States"
20120824-07	13:26	Pam	"Washington & Wall Street: The Revolving Door"
20120825-08	14:17	Pam	Money & Politics
20120825-10	15:12	SteveG	Re: Money & Politics (reply to Pam, above)
20120825-11	16:04	Art	Re: Money & Politics (reply to Pam, above)
20120825-12	16:27	Pam	Re: Money & Politics (reply to Art, above)
20120825-14	17:51	SteveB	Re: Money & Politics (reply to Pam, above)
20120826-01	03:34	Dennis	Re: Money & Politics (reply to Pam, above)
20120826-11	11:24	Pam	Re: Money & Politics (reply to Dennis, above)

DATE-ID	TIME	FROM	SUBJECT/TITLE
20120826-15	12:21	Art	Re: Money & Politics (reply to Pam, above)
20120825-13	17:41	SteveB	Re: Money & Politics (reply to Art, above)
20120825-17	19:03	Art	Re: Money & Politics (reply to SteveB, above)
20120825-15	18:06	SteveG	Re: Money & Politics (reply to SteveB, above)
20120828-14	16:47	Art	Video: Johnny Carson's 1982 "Politician's Lie Detector Test"
(12) EDUCATION			
20120809-05	16:40	Jim	Quote: Donald D. Quinn on a Teacher's Job
20120809-08	19:46	SteveB	Re: Quote: Donald D. Quinn on a Teacher's Job (reply to Jim, above)
20120821-03	07:40	MarthaH	"A Cheat Sheet to What Makes Today's College Freshmen Click"
20120822-19	23:58	SteveG	Quotes: The Candidates on Paying for Higher Education
(13) ELECTION REFORM			
20120804-02	05:56	SteveG	Graphic: Corruption American-Style
20120811-02	07:40	SteveB	Video: "Florida Ex-GOP Chair: Voter Suppression Strategies Go Beyond Voter ID Laws"
20120813-10	18:12	SteveB	Exxon for President!
20120813-12	18:17	Ben	Re: Exxon for President! (reply to SteveB, above)
20120815-04	10:39	MarthaH	"Why 90 Million Americans Won't Vote in November"
(14) EXECUTIVE BRANCH			
(15) GUNS / INSURRECTION / CRIME			
20120808-01	06:14	Tom	Video: Shooter Who Aided Officer Gives His Account of Peach House RV Park Incident
20120814-22	23:22	Tom	"How Did This Border Patrol Agent's Gun Snap in Half?"
20120815-02	06:32	MarthaH	"American Gun Lovers Turn to Russian AK-47s"
20120818-13	23:10	SteveG	"Suspects in Deputy Killings Linked to Extremists"
20120819-02	11:09	Pam	Re: "Suspects in Deputy Killings Linked to Extremists" (reply to SteveG, above)
20120819-06	12:44	SteveM	Graphics: Gun Control?
20120819-10	14:45	SteveM	Fw: NRA Video: "Borderless!"
20120819-12	18:51	SteveB	Re: NRA Video: "Borderless!" (reply to SteveM, above)
20120819-13	19:05	SteveB	Re: NRA Video: "Borderless!" (reply to SteveM, above) & Video: "Revealed: The GOP Strategy"
20120820-04	12:50	Art	Re: NRA Video: "Borderless!" (reply to SteveB & SteveM, FotM Newsletter #207)
20120820-09	16:16	SteveM	Re: NRA Video: "Borderless!" (reply to Art, above)
20120820-15	18:39	Art	Re: NRA Video: "Borderless!" (reply to SteveM, above)
20120820-18	21:20	SteveM	Re: NRA Video: "Borderless!" (reply to Art, above) & "Once Welcoming, Borderlands Now Forever Divided" & "Southwest Border Violence: Issues in Identifying and Measuring Spillover Violence" & "Killed in Smuggling Corridor Where Deputy Was Shot: Two Men" & "Tucson Sector Border Patrol Reports: \$2.3 Million in Dope and One Truck Seized"
20120821-23	20:19	Art	Re: NRA Video: "Borderless!" (reply to SteveM, FotM Newsletter #208)
20120822-01	05:17	Tom	Video: "How One Texas County Fakes Crime Stats to Make Border Look Safe"
20120826-04	06:55	SteveB	From the Right: "Homeland Security Prepares for Civil War"
20120826-07	09:01	Beth	Re: "Homeland Security Prepares for Civil War" (reply to SteveB, above)
20120826-08	10:58	Art	Re: "Homeland Security Prepares for Civil War" (reply to SteveB, above)

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20120826-10	11:15	Ben	Re: "Homeland Security Prepares for Civil War" (reply to SteveB, above)
20120826-13	11:28	Pam	Re: "Homeland Security Prepares for Civil War" (reply to SteveB, above)
20120826-14	12:03	Clark	Re: "Homeland Security Prepares for Civil War" (reply to Pam, above)
20120827-05	17:03	SteveG	"Prosecutor: Georgia Murder Case Uncovers Terror Plot"
20120830-17	20:21	SteveM	"More Arizona Guns with the Mexican Cartels?"
20120830-19	20:49	SteveM	"Militarization of Texas Highway Patrol"
(16) IMMIGRATION			
20120823-31	23:58	SteveG	Graphic: A Different Perspective on Immigration
(17) JUDICIAL BRANCH			
(18) LEGISLATIVE BRANCH			
20120826-19	23:58	SteveG	Quote: Will Rogers on Congressmen
(19) MISC. GOVERNMENT / CORRESPONDENCE w/ OFFICIALS			
(20) REPRODUCTION / WOMEN / LGBT			
20120802-10	23:58	Marci	"Why Men Shouldn't Write Advice Columns"
20120808-02	07:14	MarthaH	"School's Policy Requires Girls to Take Pregnancy Tests"
20120820-05	14:36	SteveB	"Todd Akin: It's Not a War on Women, It's a War on Critical Thinking & Democracy"
20120820-06	14:56	Art	Re: "Todd Akin: It's Not a War on Women, It's a War on Critical Thinking & Democracy" (reply to SteveB, above)
20120820-11	16:55	SteveB	Re: "Todd Akin: It's Not a War on Women, It's a War on Critical Thinking & Democracy" (reply to Art, above)
20120823-00		SteveB	The Sacred Sperm Must Be Protected Too! by Steven W. Baker / SteveB ("Go for It, GOP — Sperm Rights!")
20120824-08	13:55	SteveG	"GOP Official Says God Chooses to Bless Raped Women with Pregnancy"
20120824-12	22:49	SteveG	Quote: David Letterman on Hurricane Isaac
20120828-15	18:50	Marci	Fw: Husband of the Year Awards
20120830-11	17:45	SteveG	Graphic: Vaginas Are Job-Free Zones (Except for Prostitutes)
(21) SOCIAL SECURITY / RETIREMENT			
20120813-11	18:14	Ginny	Fw: Social Security = Entitlement?
20120813-13	21:11	SteveG	Quote: Sen. Bernie Sanders on Saving Social Security
20120817-01	01:59	SteveG	Fw: News Update (from Sen. Bernie Sanders)
20120822-04	11:06	Phil	Fw: Social Security / Government
20120822-07	14:13	SteveB	Re: Social Security / Government (reply to Phil, above)
20120822-09	15:25	Pam	Re: Social Security / Government (reply to Phil, above)
20120822-11	17:47	SteveG	Re: Social Security / Government (reply to Phil, above)
20120822-13	18:56	Art	Re: Social Security / Government (reply to Phil, above)
(22) STATE / LOCAL GOVERNMENT			
(23) TAXES			
20120803-11	18:11	SteveB	Fw: Who Is Fighting for Middle Class Tax Cuts? Obama vs. Romney Personal Income Tax Calculator

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20120808-07	12:37	SteveB	"America's 10 Largest Corporations Paid 9 Percent Average Tax Rate Last Year"
20120816-03	11:29	SteveG	"Taxpayers Subsidize CEO Pay, Report Says"
20120822-16	23:04	SteveM	Fw: Sign of the Times
20120822-18	23:38	SteveB	Re: Sign of the Times (reply to SteveM, above)
20120823-02	11:39	SteveM	Re: Sign of the Times (reply to SteveB, FotM Newsletter #210)
20120823-06	13:43	SteveB	Re: Sign of the Times (reply to SteveM, above)
20120826-00		SteveB	Titanic Tax Rip-Off of Middle Class America by Steven W. Baker / SteveB ("\$Trillions Stashed in Tax Havens")
20120825-01	05:28	SteveB	"Sher Valenzuela, GOP's 'We Built It' Speaker, Received Millions in Government Loans"
20120825-07	10:25	SteveM	Re: "Sher Valenzuela, GOP's 'We Built It' Speaker, Received Millions in Government Loans" (reply to SteveB, above)
20120826-17	19:07	SteveB	Re: "Sher Valenzuela, GOP's 'We Built It' Speaker, Received Millions in Government Loans" (reply to SteveM, above)
20120827-02	12:08	SteveB	"Add It Up: Taxes Avoided by the Rich Could Pay Off the Deficit"
(24) TRADE / INT'L RELATIONS			
20120828-10	12:01	SteveB	"The Mirage of Our Lives"
(25) WAR / SECURITY			
20120805-03	05:57	SteveB	"Towards a 'Soft Invasion'? The Launching of a 'Humanitarian War' against Syria"
20120808-11	16:28	SteveG	"Company Previously Known as Blackwater Agrees to \$7.5 Million Fine in Arms Smuggling Case"
20120808-13	17:59	SteveB	Re: "Company Previously Known as Blackwater Agrees to \$7.5 Million Fine..." (reply to SteveG, above)
20120808-18	19:11	SteveG	Re: "Company Previously Known as Blackwater Agrees to \$7.5 Million Fine..." (reply to SteveB, above)
20120808-14	18:11	Dennis	"Preparing to Fail"
20120808-16	18:35	SteveB	Re: "Preparing to Fail" (reply to Dennis, above)
20120808-17	19:08	SteveG	Re: "Preparing to Fail" (reply to Dennis, above)
20120809-07	17:34	Art	Re: "Preparing to Fail" (reply to all, FotM Newsletter #200)
20120814-07	12:56	Tom	"Hexagon Spy Satellite Rescue Declassified: CIA Releases Details Of Deep-Sea Rescue"
20120814-08	13:07	Tom	Video: "Reality Check: Fast and Furious Operation Was Really About U.S. Supporting a Drug Cartel?"
20120814-10	13:42	Tom	"Silent Running"
20120815-16	18:25	Marci	Fw: The Real Miss America
20120816-07	14:38	Art	Re: The Real Miss America (reply to Marci, FotM Newsletter #205)
20120816-08	14:39	Art	Re: The Real Miss America (reply to SteveB, FotM Newsletter #205)
20120819-17	22:49	Tom	"SR-71 Blackbird Breakup at Mach 3.18"
20120821-30	23:21	Tom	"Military Vet Detained for Psych Evaluation over Anti-Government Facebook Posts"
(26) ART / LITERATURE / WRITING / MOVIES / MUSIC			
20120802-00		SteveB	'Wooden Ships...' by Steven W. Baker / SteveB ("A Transcendent CSN")
20120803-08	14:59	Tom	Movie: <i>Total Recall 2012</i>
20120805-11	12:26	Tom	Movie: <i>Red Dawn</i> Re-Dux
20120812-13	18:36	Tom	Movie: <i>Gray State</i>

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20120826-18	23:05	SteveB	"Air Guitar Contest Winner Named"
(27) BUSINESS / MONEY / ECONOMICS			
20120803-02	09:54	SteveB	"Debt, Depression, DeMarco"
20120803-09	17:33	SteveG	Graphic: See? "You DIDN'T Build That"
20120803-10	17:58	Art	Re: Graphic: See? "You DIDN'T Build That" (reply to SteveG, above)
20120804-07	16:40	SteveB	"6 Brands Playing Footsie with Conservatives & Paying the Price"
20120818-12	21:58	SteveG	"Should the Recent Upgrade of Standard Chartered Bank Concern Investors?"
20120829-11	14:55	Dennis	"The Recovery Is Beginning"
20120829-12	15:02	Pam	Re: "The Recovery Is Beginning" (reply to Dennis, above)
(28) CLASS WAR / POVERTY / RICH & POOR			
20120731-04	18:14	SteveG	Graphics: 'You Didn't Build That'
20120801-02	11:22	Bill	"The Secret of Our Un-Success"
20120801-04	13:10	SteveB	"Exhaustive Study Finds Global Elite Hiding up to \$32 Trillion in Offshore Accounts" & "The Price of Offshore Revisited"
20120805-23	17:53	SteveG	Quote: Napoleon Bonaparte: "Money Has No Motherland"
20120809-14	23:58	SteveG	Graphics: Economic Conditions & How We Got There
20120811-11	15:21	SteveB	Cartoon: 'The World Is Just...'
20120811-12	15:24	SteveG	Re: Cartoon: 'The World Is Just...' (reply to SteveB, above)
20120813-04	12:10	SteveB	"For Billionaires, a Heaven on Earth Beckons"
20120814-17	18:33	SteveG & Bill	Fw: The Best Lawyer Story of All Time
20120814-19	20:53	SteveB	Joke: The Billionaire & Ayn Rand Fan (reply to SteveG, above)
20120814-20	21:12	SteveM	Re: The Billionaire & Ayn Rand Fan (reply to SteveB, above)
20120815-11	13:51	Art	Re: The Billionaire & Ayn Rand Fan (reply to SteveB, FotM Newsletter #204)
20120815-15	17:51	SteveB	Re: The Billionaire & Ayn Rand Fan (reply to Art, above)
20120815-17	18:39	Art	Re: The Billionaire & Ayn Rand Fan (reply to SteveB, above)
20120820-02	11:29	Bill	Graphic: Good Question!!!
20120823-21	18:04	SteveB	"Pew: Middle Class Poorer, Earning Less And Shrinking"
(29) DAILY PHOTOS / PHOTOGRAPHY			
20120801-08	23:59	SteveB	Photo: Niagara
20120802-11	23:59	SteveB	Photo: Rock Climbing in the Black Hills, the Dakotas
20120805-26	23:59	SteveB	Photo: Ocean of Life
20120806-11	23:59	SteveB	Photo: Keel-Billed Toucan
20120807-22	23:59	SteveB	Photo: Austin, Texas
20120808-21	23:59	SteveB	Photo: Isle Royale
20120809-15	23:59	SteveB	Photo: Young Cat
20120812-16	23:59	SteveB	Photo: "The Gates of Hell Have Opened in Guatemala"
20120813-22	23:59	SteveB	Photo: Gnaw Bone, Indiana
20120814-24	23:59	SteveB	Photo: Fern Cliff, Indiana
20120815-19	23:59	SteveB	Photo: Indiana Pea Pod
20120816-20	23:59	SteveB	Photo: Daybreak over Indiana
20120819-18	23:59	SteveB	Photo: Río Piraí at Flood, Porongo, Bolivia
20120820-21	23:59	SteveB	Photo: Blackstock Stadium, DePauw University, Greencastle, Indiana
20120821-34	23:59	SteveB	Photo: Baby Bolivian Anteater
20120822-20	23:59	SteveB	Photo: Yungas Valley, Bolivia (Coffee/Coca District)
20120823-32	23:59	SteveB	Photo: Devils Tower, Wyoming

DATE-ID	TIME	FROM	SUBJECT/TITLE
20120826-20	23:59	SteveB	Photo: Idol Rock, Brimham Moor, U.K.
20120827-14	23:59	SteveB	Photo: Playing the Ace of Spades
20120828-18	23:59	SteveB	Photo: Cathedral Interior, Barcelona, Spain
20120829-33	23:59	SteveB	Photo: Wisconsin Dells
20120830-22	23:59	SteveB	Photo: Nautor Swan 90
(30) ENERGY / TRANSPORTATION / WATER			
20120826-12	11:24	Art	"The Most Expensive Luxury Car in the World"
20120828-11	13:21	SteveB	"Superior Fuel Cell Material Developed"
(31) FOOD / DRINK			
20120805-05	08:36	SteveB	Video: "World's Largest Drive-In Restaurant"
20120814-12	14:40	Ben	Photo: Today's Lunch at Apple
20120815-13	15:08	Ben	Photos: Today's Lunch at Apple
20120816-16	20:13	Ben	Photo: Today's Lunch at Apple
20120821-08	14:34	Ben	Photos: Today's Lunch at Apple
20120821-13	15:40	SteveB	Re: Today's Lunch at Apple (reply to Ben, above)
20120821-14	15:43	Ben	Re: Today's Lunch at Apple (reply to SteveB, above)
20120821-15	15:48	SteveB	Re: Today's Lunch at Apple (reply to Ben, above)
20120821-19	16:08	Ben	Re: Today's Lunch at Apple (reply to SteveB, above)
20120822-08	14:15	Ben	Photo: Today's Lunch at Apple
20120823-08	14:19	Ben	Photo: Today's Lunch at Apple
20120822-12	18:11	SteveB	Invalsa Coffee from Bolivia
20120828-12	14:27	Ben	Photos: Last Friday's Lunch at Apple
20120828-06	10:39	Ben	Photo: Monday's Lunch at Apple
20120828-13	14:38	Ben	Photo: Today's Lunch at Apple
20120829-16	15:52	Ben	Today's Lunch at Apple
(32) FRIENDS OF THE MIDDLE			
20120731-02	16:24	Pam	Together at Last!
20120731-03	17:14	SteveB	Re: Together at Last! (reply to Pam, above)
20120808-09	14:24	SteveB	Bolivian Bakery Biz — Update
20120812-05	07:31	MarthaH	Art's Birthday Tomorrow!
20120813-01	06:32	SteveB & Art	HB!
20120816-10	16:55	Pam	Pam's Update
20120816-11	17:07	SteveB	Re: Pam's Update (reply to Pam, above)
20120816-12	17:34	Art	Re: Pam's Update (reply to Pam, above)
20120816-13	19:35	Pam	Re: Pam's Update (reply to Art & SteveB, above)
20120817-03	09:55	Pam	Photo: My Son, David
20120821-01	06:18	SteveB	Two Lovely
(33) FUN / DIVERSION			
20120731-05	20:08	Marci	Graphics: Misc. Life
20120731-07	20:17	Marci	Fw: Paraprozdokians
20120806-07	16:05	SteveG	Puns
20120808-03	07:48	MarthaH	Fw: The Hotel Bill
20120811-05	12:41	SteveG & SteveB	"The Tim McCarver Show — George Will" (Subject: Baseball, Mainly)
20120820-03	11:31	Bill	Graphic: First Known Picture of Michael Phelps

DATE-ID	TIME	FROM	SUBJECT/TITLE
20120821-28	22:48	Tom	There, I Fixed It. (Redneck)
20120829-17	16:50	MarthaH	Cartoon: Low Pants Generation Gap
(34) HEALTH CARE / HEALTH / MEDICINE			
20120801-03	12:49	SteveB	FREE BIRTH CONTROL!
20120814-05	12:39	SteveB	"Whose Plan Destroys Medicare — Obama's or Romney-Ryan's?"
20120816-19	23:58	SteveG	Quote: Dr. Marcia Angell on the Pharmaceutical Industry
20120821-02	07:15	MarthaH	"The Real Medicare Question"
20120821-04	09:22	Art	Re: "The Real Medicare Question" (reply to MarthaH, above)
20120829-03	10:49	SteveB	From the Right: "The War on Drugs: Because Prohibition Worked So Well..."
20120829-20	18:19	SteveB	"RNC vs DNC – Will Medical Marijuana Decide the Election?"
(35) HISTORY			
(36) JOBS / LABOR			
(37) LIFE / PHILOSOPHY / SPIRITUALITY			
20120802-05	15:22	MarthaH	"Heavin Recovering Following Tractor Accident"
20120803-07	14:59	Pam	Re: "Heavin Recovering Following Tractor Accident" (reply to MarthaH, FotM Newsletter #196)
20120805-24	23:05	Tom	Graphic: Intelligent
20120805-06	10:17	Mr. Sueman Bello	CONFIDENCE TRUST AND HONEST
20120809-00		SteveB	What Love Can Do by Steven W. Baker / SteveB ("Photographer Captures Tender Moment Between Man and His Sick Dog in Lake Superior" & Poem: "Intrepid Integrity")
20120809-06	17:17	Art	Re: What Love Can Do (reply to SteveB, FotM Newsletter #200)
20120811-07	14:08	Tom	Fw: Warning on Deceptive Bible Translations
20120811-09	14:24	SteveB	Re: Warning on Deceptive Bible Translations (reply to Tom, above)
(38) MEDIA / NEWS MEDIA			
20120801-07	21:54	SteveG	Graphic: Fox News Distortion of Reality
(39) MISC. REALITY			
20120815-12	14:47	SteveG	"Why Do We Idolize Jerks?"
(40) OCCUPY WALL ST.			
(41) PETITIONS / ACTIONS / CAUSES			
20120806-01	09:56	SteveB	Fw: MoveOn Action: Start Your Own Online Petition!
20120808-06	11:50	SteveB	Fw: MoveOn Action: Become a Movement Maker!
20120809-01	11:33	SteveB	Fw: Daily Kos Petition: Ask Democrats in 'Safe' Districts to Help Other Democrats!
20120810-04	12:29	SteveB	Fw: MoveOn Action: Share R0mney's Creepy Story!
20120811-06	13:02	SteveB	Fw: Daily Kos Action: Donate \$5 to Our 'Upgrade the Senate' Project!
20120811-10	15:08	SteveB	Fw: MoveOn Action: Chip in \$5 to Help America Learn the Truth About Paul Ryan!

<u>DATE-ID</u>	<u>TIME</u>	<u>FROM</u>	<u>SUBJECT/TITLE</u>
20120811-22	22:13	Tom	Fw: Mitt R0mney Action: Send Me \$15 NOW!
20120812-02	06:21	SteveB	Re: Mitt R0mney Action: Send Me \$15 NOW! (reply to Tom, above)
20120812-01	00:15	Tom	Fw: Ann R0mney Action: Donate \$5 for a Bumper Stcker NOW!
20120812-03	06:32	SteveB	Re: Ann R0mney Action: Donate \$5 for a Bumper Stcker NOW! (reply to Tom, above)
20120813-07	14:47	SteveB	Fw: Dennis Kucinich Action: Watch Our Video & Contribute!
20120813-18	23:02	SteveM	Fw: FREEDOM PUSH, Aug. 11.
20120813-20	23:48	SteveB	Re: FREEDOM PUSH, Aug. 11. (reply to SteveM, above)
20120814-04	10:53	SteveB	Fw: CREDO Action Petition: Demand Medicare for All!
20120814-06	12:49	SteveB	Fw: UltraViolet Action: Share the Facts About Paul Ryan's Record on Women's Issues!
20120814-11	13:53	SteveB	Fw: USAction Petition: Tell R0mney-Ryan to Say No to Privatizing Social Security!
20120815-01	06:15	SteveB	Fw: CREDO Action Petition: Support Medicare for All!
20120815-10	13:26	Art	Fw: Democracy for America Action: Tell Debate Moderators to Ask R0mney What He's Hiding!
20120816-05	14:05	SteveG	Fw: CREDO Action Petition: Tell Romney & Ryan to RSVP the Nuns!
20120816-09	16:50	SteveG	Fw: MoveOn Action: Get Out the Romney-Ryan Pink Slip Message Today!
20120816-14	19:38	SteveG	Fw: Working America Survey: What Do You Think About Paul Ryan?!
20120818-09	12:45	SteveB	Fw: SignOn.org Petition: Reinstate the Glass-Steagall Act!
20120822-10	15:50	SteveB	Fw: MoveOn Petition: Stop the GOP War on Women!
20120823-14	16:03	SteveB	Fw: Avaaz Petition: Help the Lakota Sioux Save Their Sacred Black Hills Land!
20120824-04	10:04	SteveG	Fw: CREDO Action Petition: Rape Is Rape! Censure Todd Akin!
20120826-05	07:10	SteveB	Fw: Avaaz Petition: Free Pussy Riot, Free Russia!
20120827-10	20:50	SteveG	Fw: Kucinich Action: Make Your Voice Heard!
20120829-02	09:11	SteveB	Fw: CREDO Action Petition: Tell Duke Energy to Stop Funding ALEC!
20120829-08	13:24	SteveG	Fw: MoveOn Action: Watch "The Man from Bloomfield Hills"!
(42) SCIENCE / TECHNOLOGY			
20120806-00		SteveB	We Are Killing My Beloved Seas by Steven W. Baker / SteveB ("Walking the Waters")
20120804-09	17:53	SteveB	"Chomsky: The Most Powerful Country in History Is Destroying the Earth & Human Rights as We Know Them"
20120805-14	14:06	Art	"Climate Change Is Here — And Worse Than We Thought"
20120808-05	10:56	SteveB	Video: "10 Unexplained Scientific Phenomena"
(43) U.S.A., THE			
20120814-00		SteveB	Let the South Go? by Steven W. Baker / SteveB ("Should the South Secede?")
20120820-01	07:56	MarthaH	"States That Get the Most Federal Money"
20120828-00		SteveB	2012: What America Has Come To by Steven W. Baker / SteveB ("The United States in 2012: A Status Update for the Country")
(44) WORLD, THE			
20120803-12	18:49	Art	Re: Morocco (reply to Dennis, FotM Newsletter #188)
20120806-03	12:03	SteveB	Bolivia's Birthday
20120806-05	12:27	Ann	Re: Bolivia's Birthday (reply to SteveB, above)
20120806-06	13:21	Art	Re: Bolivia's Birthday (reply to SteveB, above)

<u>DATE-ID</u>	<u>TIME</u>	<u>FROM</u>	<u>SUBJECT/TITLE</u>
20120811-08	14:10	SteveG	"Dragging America into Court: Law of the Sea & Global Litigation"
20120817-00		SteveB	Creators to Suck Hind Teat in the U.S. by Steven W. Baker / SteveB ("Buenos Aires Supports Aging Writers")
20120818-08	11:54	SteveB	"We Don't Need No Bloody Treaties: Britain Blows a Fuse over Ecuador's Asylum Grant to Wikileaks' Assange"
20120829-18	17:39	Charis	"Bolivian Police Confiscate \$50 Million of Uranium in La Paz" & Video: Festival Internacional de Cine Verde en Bolivia. Septiembre a Noviembre 2012



FRIENDS OF THE MIDDLE NEWSLETTER #194 — AUG. 1, 2012

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

INDEX: Click here.

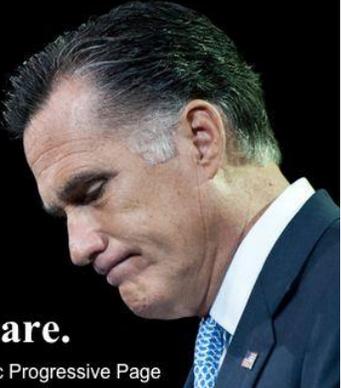
R0mney Praises Socialized Health Care

(posted by Art Hotop, graphics posted by SteveG, Aug. 1, 2012)

As we struggle to come up with a health care system that is better than what we have, apparently Israel has one that works pretty well and is much cheaper to execute, according to Mr. Romney. Now exactly what is the difference between the philosophy behind this one and our own new ACA? Other than the Obama part of course.

Hmmmm. Confused. Is he for real????

"Do you realize what health care spending is as a percentage of the GDP in Israel? 8 percent. And you're a pretty healthy nation. We spend 18 percent of our GDP on health care. We have to find ways, not just to provide health care to more people, but to find ways to finally manage our health care costs." — Mitt Romney



Note to Mitt: Israel has **socialized health care.**

The Pragmatic Progressive Page

"Romney Praises Health Care in Israel, Where Research Says 'Strong Government Influence' Has Driven Down Costs" by Sarah Kliff, *The Washington Post*

July 30, 2012, (<http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/ezra-klein/wp/2012/07/30/romney-praises-health-care-in-israel-where-strong-government-influence-has-driven-down-costs/>)

Republican presidential candidate Mitt Romney had some very kind things to say about the Israeli health care system at a fundraiser there Monday. He praised Israel for spending just 8 percent of its GDP on health care and still remaining a "pretty healthy nation:"

When our health care costs are completely out of control. Do you realize what health care spending is as a percentage of the GDP in Israel? 8 percent. You spend 8 percent of GDP on health care. And you're a pretty healthy nation. We spend 18 percent of our GDP on health care. 10 percentage points more. That gap, that 10 percent cost, let me compare that with the size of our military. Our military budget is 4 percent. Our gap

with Israel is 10 points of GDP. We have to find ways, not just to provide health care to more people, but to find ways to finally manage our health care costs.

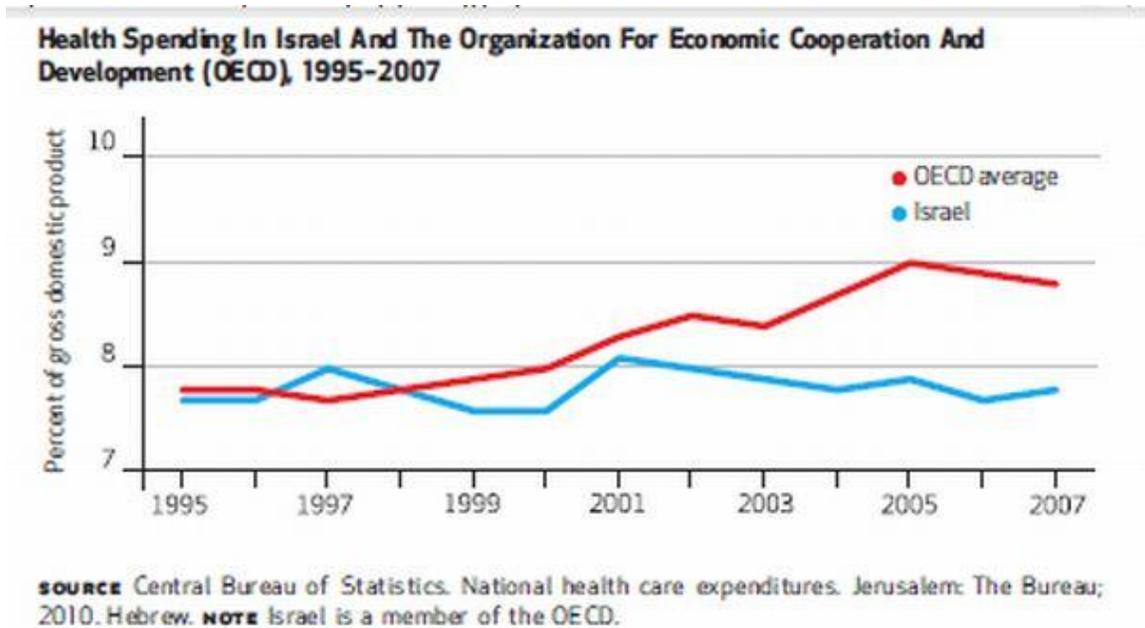
Romney's point about Israel's success in controlling health care costs is spot on: Its health care system has seen health care costs grow much slower than other industrialized nations.

How it has gotten there, however, may not be to the Republican candidate's liking: Israel regulates its health care system aggressively, requiring all residents to carry insurance and capping revenue for various parts of the country's health care system.

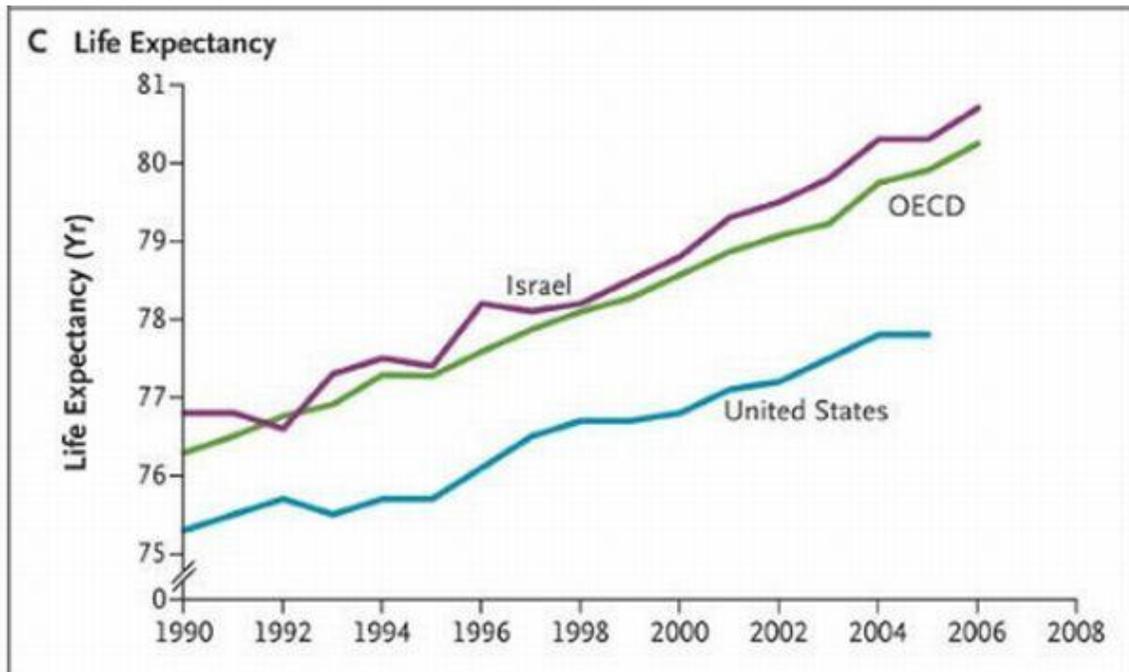
Israel created a national health care system in 1995, largely funded through payroll and general tax revenue. The government provides all citizens with health insurance: They get to pick from one of four competing, nonprofit plans. Those insurance plans have to accept all customers—including people with pre-existing conditions—and provide residents with a broad set of government-mandated benefits.

Health insurance does not, however, cover every medical service. Dental and vision care, for example, fall outside of the standard government set of benefits. The majority of Israelis—81 percent—purchase a supplemental health insurance plan to “use the private health care system for services that may not be available in through the public system,” according to a paper by Health Affairs.

Now, let's get to the costs. As you can see in the chart below, Israel's health care costs have hovered around 8 percent of its gross domestic product for over two decades, while other countries' have seen theirs rise:



Israel's lower health care spending does not look to sacrifice the quality of care. It has made more improvements than the United States on numerous quality metrics, and the country continues to have a higher life expectancy:



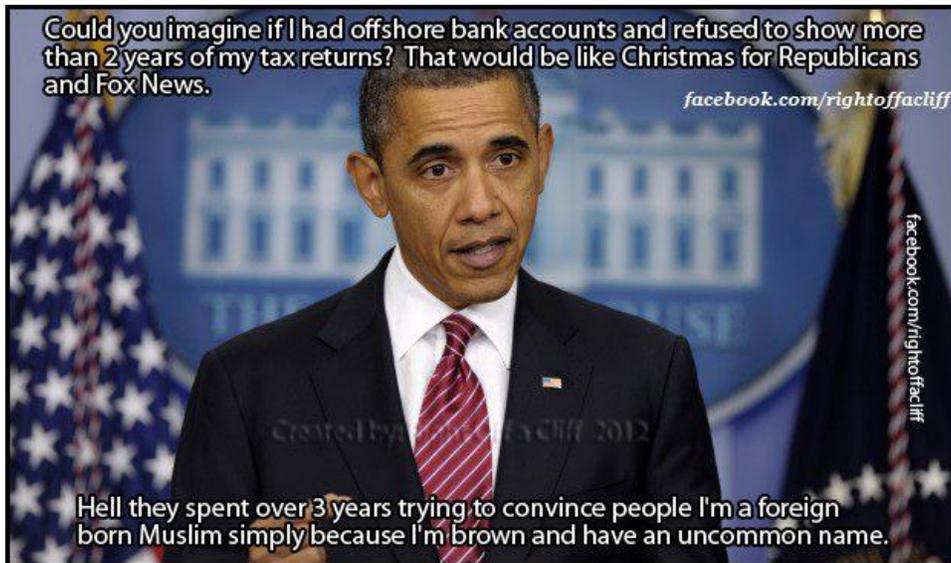
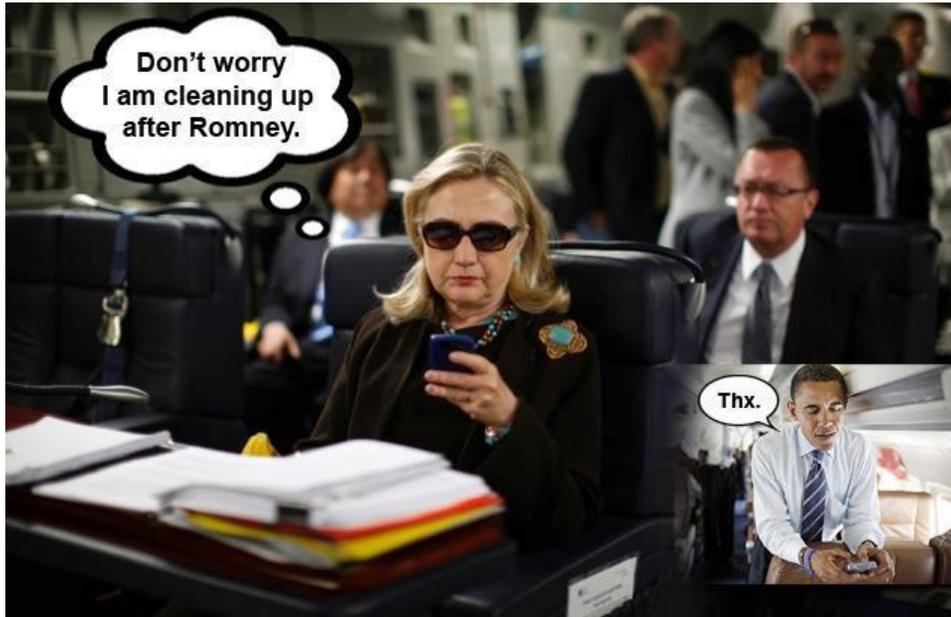
Source: New England Journal of Medicine

How'd they do it? Jack Zwanziger and Shuli Brammli-Greenberg took a crack at that question in a 2011 Health Affairs paper. The answer, they say, has a lot to do with "strong government influence:

The national government exerts direct operational control over a large proportion of total health care expenditures, through a range of mechanisms, including caps on hospital revenue and national contracts with salaried physicians. The Ministry of Finance has been able to persuade the national government to agree to relatively small increases in the health care budget because the system has performed well, with a very high level of public satisfaction.

The Israeli Ministry of Finance controls about 40 percent of Israel's health care expenditures through those payments to the four insurance plans. The ministry decides how much it will pay the health plans for each Israeli citizen they enroll, making adjustments for how old a person is and how high their health care costs are expected to be.

It's then up to the health insurance plan to figure out how to provide coverage within that set budget. If they spend too much—have a patient who is constantly in the hospital, for example—they will find themselves in the red. It's that set budget—a capitated budget, in health policy terms—that seems to be crucial to the Israeli health care system's success in cost control.



[20120731-01](#) 15:56 SteveG Video: "What's the Difference Between 'Liberal' and 'Conservative'?"

"What's the Difference Between 'Liberal' and 'Conservative'?" posted by Alicia, MoveOn.org

May 17, 2011, (<http://front.moveon.org/whats-the-difference-between-liberal-and-conservative/#.UBqvU9z0P5k.facebook>)

Jimmy Smits of "The West Wing" really does have all the answers. Watch this clip, plucked right from the debate episode in season seven. ("Why Is 'Liberal' a Bad Word?")

Video: http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=zTFp7WG9J-E.

[20120731-02](#) 16:24 Pam Together at Last!

My son David Eastbrook. I wanted to share. :-)

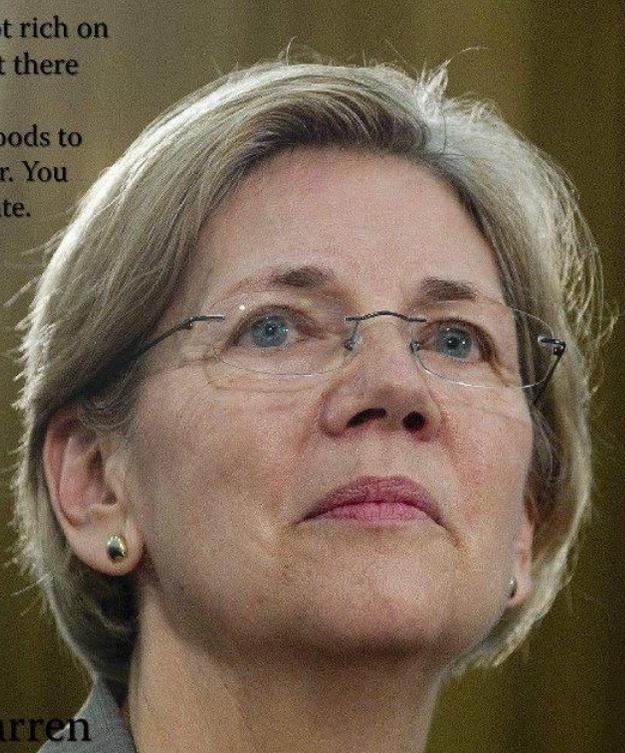
[20120731-03](#) 17:14 SteveB Re: Together at Last! (reply to Pam, above)

Gaining a "new" son or Mom? More than priceless! Congratulations, Pam. We have been with you during your struggles and will continue to be. All Friends of the Middle love such happy news!

[20120731-04](#) 18:14 SteveG Graphics: 'You Didn't Build That'

Elizabeth Warren said it better:

"There is nobody in this country who got rich on his own. Nobody. You built a factory out there — good for you! But I want to be clear. You moved your goods to market on the roads the rest of us paid for. You hired workers the rest of us paid to educate. You were safe in your factory because of police forces and fire forces that the rest of us paid for. You didn't have to worry that maurauding bands would come and seize everything at your factory, and hire someone to protect against this, because of the work the rest of us did. Now look, you built a factory and it turned into something terrific, or a great idea — God bless. Keep a big hunk of it. But part of the underlying social contract is you take a hunk of that and pay forward for the next kid who comes along." - Elizabeth Warren



And this is what she was talking about:

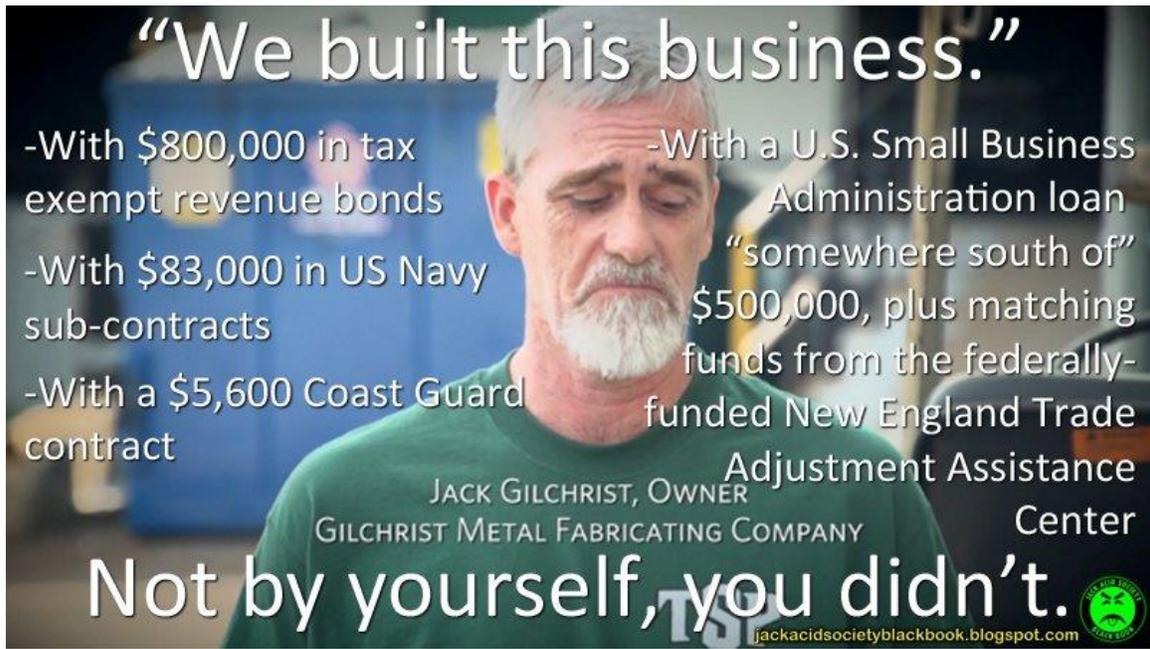
"We built this business."

- With \$800,000 in tax exempt revenue bonds
- With \$83,000 in US Navy sub-contracts
- With a \$5,600 Coast Guard contract
- With a U.S. Small Business Administration loan "somewhere south of" \$500,000, plus matching funds from the federally-funded New England Trade Adjustment Assistance Center

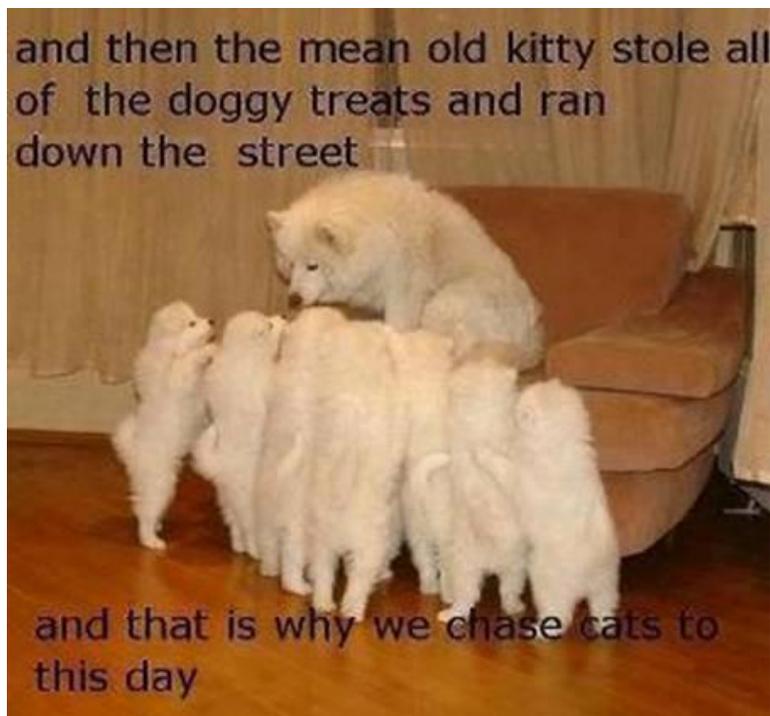
JACK GILCHRIST, OWNER
GILCHRIST METAL FABRICATING COMPANY

Not by yourself, you didn't.

jackacidsocietyblackbook.blogspot.com



20120731-05 20:08 Marci Graphics: Misc. Life



MOM, THIS IS NOT FUNNY!



**YOU KNOW I WANTED AN
IPAD!**

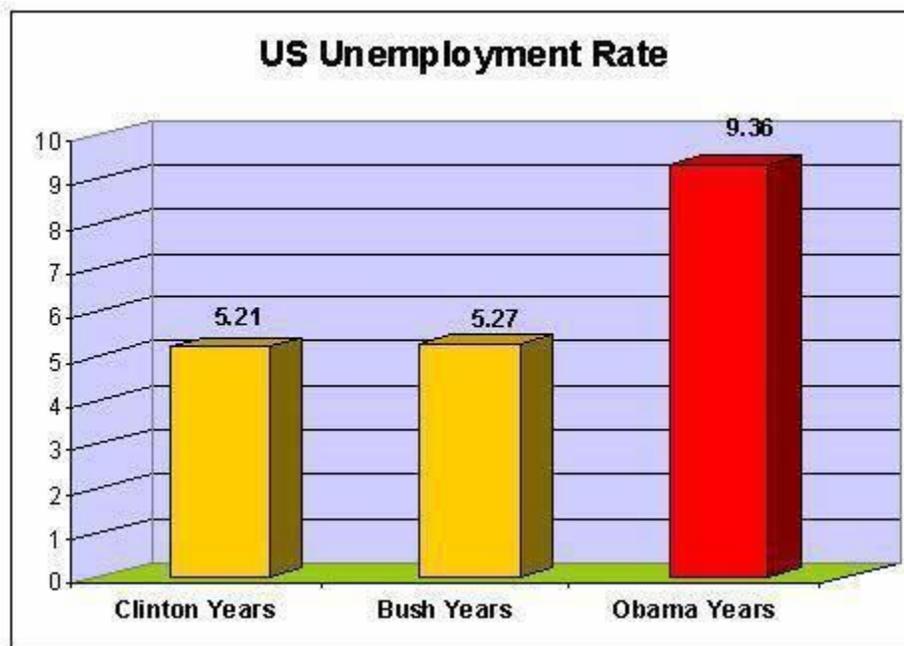
www.IAmModAtYouCards.com

**Today's the day. I can feel it.
Today I am going to catch the red dot!**



ICANHATCHEEZBURGER.COM

This is a real easy view of our current president's accomplishments. Interesting statistics...



I had to look up "paraprosdokian". Here is the definition: "Figure of speech in which the latter part of a sentence or phrase is surprising or unexpected; frequently used in a humorous situation."

"Where there's a will, I want to be in it," is a type of paraprosdokian. Ok, so now enjoy!

1. Do not argue with an idiot. He will drag you down to his level and beat you with experience.
2. The last thing I want to do is hurt you. But it's still on my list.
3. Light travels faster than sound. This is why some people appear bright until you hear them speak.
4. If I agreed with you, we'd both be wrong.
5. We never really grow up, we only learn how to act in public.
6. War does not determine who is right - only who is left.
7. Knowledge is knowing a tomato is a fruit. Wisdom is not putting it in a fruit salad.
8. Evening news is where they begin with 'Good Evening,' and then proceed to tell you why it isn't.
9. To steal ideas from one person is plagiarism. To steal from many is research.
10. A bus station is where a bus stops. A train station is where a train stops. On my desk, I have a work station.
11. I thought I wanted a career. Turns out I just wanted paychecks.
12. Whenever I fill out an application, in the part that says, 'In case of emergency, notify:' I put 'DOCTOR.'

13. I didn't say it was your fault, I said I was blaming you.
14. Women will never be equal to men until they can walk down the street with a bald head and a beer gut, and still think they are sexy.
15. Behind every successful man is his woman. Behind the fall of a successful man is usually another woman.
16. A clear conscience is the sign of a fuzzy memory.
17. I asked God for a bike, but I know God doesn't work that way. So I stole a bike and asked for forgiveness.
18. You do not need a parachute to skydive. You only need a parachute to skydive twice.
19. Money can't buy happiness, but it sure makes misery easier to live with.
20. There's a fine line between cuddling and holding someone down so they can't get away.
21. I used to be indecisive. Now I'm not so sure.
22. You're never too old to learn something stupid.
23. To be sure of hitting the target, shoot first and call whatever you hit the target.
24. Nostalgia isn't what it used to be.
25. Change is inevitable, except from a vending machine.
26. Going to church doesn't make you a Christian any more than standing in a garage makes you a car.
27. A diplomat is someone who tells you to go to hell in such a way that you look forward to the trip.
28. Hospitality is making your guests feel at home even when you wish they were.
29. I always take life with a grain of salt. Plus a slice of lemon, and a shot of tequila.
30. When tempted to fight fire with fire, remember that the Fire Department usually uses water.

"The early bird may get the worm, but the second mouse gets the cheese." —Jon Hammond

20120731-08	20:17	SteveM	Fw: Barry...
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[This is wonderful! I love it! Now I like Barry even more! What a normal guy! One of us! Not like R0mney, who wouldn't be able to talk to any of us without condescension. But I'm sure you never did any of these things that your email alleges, right, SteveM? —SteveB]

THIS IS WORRISOME TO SEE AND WE KNOW THE NEWS MEDIA HAS NOT PUBLICIZED THIS. WHAT WOULD HAVE HAPPENED IF THEY HAD THIS MUCH INFO ON ANY OTHER PRESIDENT OR PUBLIC FIGURE????

Good read.....

Barry the Dope Dealer (One reason Obama's school files are SEALED.)

Barry was quite the accomplished marijuana addicted enthusiast back in high school and college. Excerpts from David Maraniss' Barack Obama: The Story "Barry the Dope dealer" with the elaborate drug culture surrounding the president when he attended Punahou School in Honolulu and Occidental College in Los Angeles . He definitely inhaled, a hell of a lot of smoke.

1. The Choom Gang



A self-selected group of boys at Punahou School who loved basketball and good times called themselves the Choom Gang. Choom is a verb, meaning "to smoke marijuana."

2. Total Absorption



As a member of the Choom Gang, Barry Obama was known for starting a few pot-smoking trends. The first was called "TA," short for "total absorption." To place this in the physical and political context of another young man who would grow up to be president, TA was the antithesis of Bill Clinton's claim that as a Rhodes scholar at

Oxford he smoked dope but never inhaled.

3. Roof Hits



Along with TA, Barry popularized the concept of "roof hits": when they were chooming in the car all the windows had to be rolled up so no smoke blew out and went to waste; when the pot was gone, they tilted their heads back and sucked in the last bit of smoke from the ceiling. [Where's Barry? -SteveB]

4. Penalties



When you were with Barry and his pals, if you exhaled precious pakalolo (Hawaiian slang for marijuana, meaning "numbing tobacco") instead of absorbing it fully into your lungs, you were assessed a penalty and your turn was skipped the next time the joint came around. "Wasting good bud smoke was not tolerated," explained one member of the Choom Gang, Tom Topolinski, the Chinese-looking kid with a Polish name who answered to Topo.

5. The Choomwagon



[Choom Gang member] Mark Bendix's Volkswagen bus, also known as the Choomwagon. ... The other members considered Mark Bendix the glue, he was funny, creative, and uninhibited, with a penchant for Marvel Comics. He also had that VW bus and a house with a pool, a bong, and a Nerf basketball, all enticements for them to slip off midday for a few unauthorized hours of recreation...

6. Interceptions



Barry also had a knack for interceptions. When a joint was making the rounds, he often elbowed his way in, out of turn, shouted "Intercepted!," and took an extra hit. No one seemed to mind.

7. Slippers



Choom Gang members often made their way to Aku Ponds at the end of Manoa Stream, where they slipped past the liliko'i vines and the KAPU (keep out) signs, waded into waist-high cool mountain water, stood near the rock where water rushed overhead, and held up a slipper (what flip-flops are called in Hawaii) to create an air pocket canopy. It was a natural high, they said, stoned or not. [I don't see Barry... --SteveB]

8. Ray The Dealer



He was a long-haired haole hippie who worked at the Mama Mia Pizza Parlor not far from Punahou and lived in a dilapidated bus in an abandoned warehouse. ... According to Topolinski, Ray the dealer was "freakin' scary." Many years later they learned that he had been killed with a ball-peen hammer by a scorned gay lover. But at the time he was useful because of his ability to "score quality weed."

In another section of the [senior] yearbook, students were given a block of space to express thanks and define their high school experience. ... Nestled below [Obama's] photographs was one odd line of gratitude: "Thanks Tut, Gramps, Choom Gang, and Ray for all the good times." ... A hippie drug-dealer made his acknowledgments; his own mother did not.

9. Pumping Stations



Their favorite hangout was a place they called Pumping Stations, a lush hideaway off an unmarked, roughly paved road partway up Mount Tantalus . They parked single file on the grassy edge, turned up their stereos playing Aerosmith, Blue Oyster Cult, and Stevie Wonder, lit up some "sweet-sticky Hawaiian buds" and washed it down with "green bottle beer" (the Choom Gang preferred Heineken, Becks, and St. Pauli Girl). [Is that Barry there at the end of the rainbow? –SteveB]

10. Veto



One of the favorite words in their subculture revealed their democratic nature. The word was veto. Whenever an idea was broached, someone could hold up his hand in the V sign (a backward peace sign of that era) and

indicate that the motion wash [was?] not approved. They later shortened the process so that you could just shout "V" to get the point across.. In the Choom Gang, all V's were created equal. [So I guess this is proof positive that Barry always knew he would be President someday...even from the moment of birth! -SteveB]

11. Maui Wowie, Kauai Electric, Puna Bud And Kona Gold:



In the Honolulu of Barry's teenage years marijuana was flourishing up in the hills, out in the countryside, in covert greenhouses everywhere. It was sold and smoked right there in front of your nose; Maui Wowie, Kauai Electric, Puna Bud, Kona Gold, and other local variations of pakololo were readily available. [I guess this must be Barry's personal patch of weed...but I don't see Barry. -SteveB]

12. The Barf Couch



The Barf Couch earned its name early in the first trimester when a freshman across the hall from Obama [in the Haines Hall Annex dorm at Occidental College] drank himself into a stupor and threw up all over himself and the couch. In the manner of pallbearers hoisting a coffin, a line of Annexers lifted the tainted sofa with the freshman aboard and toted it out the back door and down four steps to the first concrete landing on the way to the parking lot. A day later, the couch remained outside in the sun, resting on its side with cushions off (someone had hosed

it clean), and soon it was back in the hallway nook.

13. The Annex Olympics



(The main hallway at Haines Hall was called the Annex,) home to the impromptu Annex Olympics: long-jumping onto a pile of mattresses, wrestling in underwear, hacking golf balls down the hallway toward the open back door, boxing while drunk. There were the non-Olympic sports of lighting farts and judging them by color, tipping over the Coke machine, breaking the glass fire extinguisher case, putting out cigarettes on the carpet, falling asleep on the carpet, flinging Frisbees at the ceiling-mounted alarm bell, tasting pizza boxes to the floor, and smoking pot from a three-foot crimson opaque bong, a two-man event involving the smoker and an accomplice standing ready to respond to the order "Hey, dude, light the bowl! [Boy! He sure looks guilty in this one! LOL! –SteveB]

Resources:

1. http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/election-2012/post/the-choom-gang-president-obamas-pot-smoking-high-school-days-detailed-in-maraniss-book/2012/05/25/qJQAwFqEqU_blog.HTML.
2. <http://www.unitedliberty.org/articles/10218-for-choom-the-bell-tolls>.
3. <http://communities.washingtontimes.com/neighborhood/politics-raising-children/2012/may/29/lessons-choom-gang-dont-air-your-dirty-laundry/>.
4. <http://abcnews.go.com/blogs/politics/2012/05/obama-and-his-pot-smoking-choom-gang/>.
5. http://www.realclearpolitics.com/2012/05/27/the_choom_gang_obama039s_pot-smoking_days_280927.html.
6. <http://theweek.com/article/index/228490/the-choom-gang-9-juiciest-details-from-barack-obamas-days-as-a-pothead>.
7. <http://www.theblaze.com/stories/the-top-headlines-about-barack-obamas-pot-smoking-high-school-choom-gang/>.
8. <http://www.buzzfeed.com/gavon/a-users-guide-to-smoking-pot-with-barack-obama>.

WHY WASN'T THIS ALL ON THE NEWS IN 2008 WHEN HE WAS RUNNING FOR OFFICE ????? and WHY ISN'T THE NEWS TALKING ABOUT IT TODAY ????? [Because he was just so darned cute? – SteveB]

Some people have the vocabulary to sum up things in a way that you can quickly understand them. This quote came from the Czech Republic. Someone over there has it figured out. It was translated into English from an article in the Prague newspaper Prager Zeitung on 04.28.2010.

"The danger to America is not Barack Obama, but a citizenry capable of entrusting a man like him with the Presidency. It will be far easier to limit and undo the follies of an Obama presidency than to restore the necessary common sense and good judgment to a depraved electorate willing to have such a man for their president. The problem is much deeper and far more serious than Mr. Obama, who is a mere symptom of what ails America. Blaming the prince of the fools should not blind anyone to the vast confederacy of fools that made him their prince.

The Republic can survive a Barack Obama, who is, after all, 'merely a fool'. It is less likely to survive a multitude of fools, such as those who made him their President."

We are in deep kimchi!

20120731-09 23:59 SteveB	Re: Barry... (reply to SteveM, above) & Photo: Does Mitt Get High Like Barry Used To?
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Wow! Romneycare and Obamacare! Both good family men. Both love marijuana (or did). Maybe Mitt and Barry are soul brothers? In which case I'll vote for the black one. He seems more authentic to me.

"Smoke & Mirrors: Is GOP Candidate Mitt Romney Down with Legal Bud?" (incl. video), by Kelly Ann Collins, Glittarazzi

Feb. 17, 2012 (<http://www.glittarazzi.com/election-2012/112382-smoke-a-mirrors-is-gop-presidential-candidate-mitt-romney-down-with-legal-bud-video.html>)

Here's a blast from the political past.

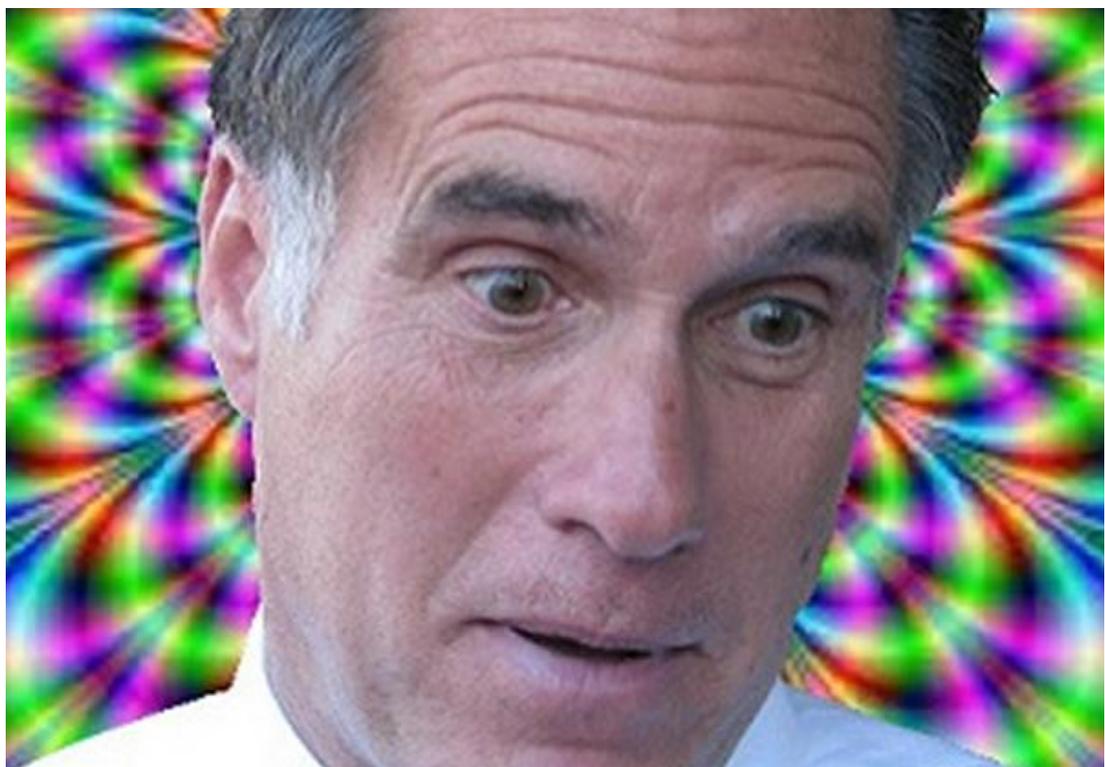
Back in 2007, Clayton Holton of "Granite Staters for Medical Marijuana" asked GOP Presidential Candidate Mitt Romney if he would have seriously ill patients, like himself, arrested for using medical marijuana -- with their doctor's approval.

(See video: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NY6UTnS6Z-A&feature=player_embedded)

But, instead of answering him ... Mitt asked him if he'd tried synthetic cannabis.

Duuuuuude, hold up! Does this mean Mitt likes him some legal bud?

We're dazed and confused.



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

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Your email address will always be kept strictly confidential.

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

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

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FRIENDS OF THE MIDDLE NEWSLETTER #195 — AUG. 2, 2012

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

INDEX: Click here.

'Wooden Ships...'

(posted by Steven W. Baker / SteveB, Aug. 2, 2012)

Taken out of oneself...floating on chords above the earth...how is there no Divine?

"A Transcendent CSN (Crosby Stills and Nash)" by Harvey Wasserman, OpEdNews

Aug. 1, 2012, (<http://www.opednews.com/articles/A-Transcendent-CSN-Crosby-by-Harvey-Wasserman-120801-285.html>)



The power of music is one of the great unknowns in the human saga. For reasons we don't quite understand (yet) its vibrations can lift us to great heights, drop us down into deep depression, liberate us, make us joyous, help us grieve, and so much more.

Thus its practitioners---the best of them---can rise to shaman status. They can speak to higher realities, lead us on political issues, arouse our spirits, calm our souls.

Those with the power are rare. There is a huge corporate industry designed to manufacture and sell commercial imitations.

But real ones still walk among us, and if we catch them at the right moment, they can move us as little else in this life.

Monday night was such a time. Crosby, Stills and Nash played under a pavilion on the Ohio River outside Cincinnati amidst a gorgeous warm night before some 4,000 folks who must be described at this point as elders.

(By way of disclosure, I've worked with Graham Nash since 1978, when he toured California with Jackson Browne, raising funds and consciousness to fight the Diablo Canyon nukes. With Bonnie Raitt, Jackson and Graham are the core of NukeFree.org, whose website I edit.)

The show was a mix of old and new, but stayed within the terrain of melodies and harmonies the trio essentially invented.

Wooden ships on the water
Very free
And easy
The way it's supposed to be.

Hearing CSN's standards reminds us Boomers of a time and place, an era of history when we were young and open and a whole new genre of music and politics and ways of being was in the birthing. There was a war on and we wanted peace, and injustices and bigotries we wanted done away with, and with all that came a mindset and culture that changed the world---but not yet enough.

With a superb supporting cast (including David Crosby's son, James Raymond), the band reminds us of why these songs became standards in the first place. It's not enough that music is of a time---it also has to be good on its own. The deep resonance of the chord changes, the perfect harmonies, master guitar riffs, intriguing lyrics...there are reasons these songs are still with us. "Carry On," "Helpless," "Suite Judy Blue Eyes," "Our House" will always carry the touch of greatness that inspired them.

Thankfully, the group has also kept its political focus. Graham dedicated "Teach Your Children" to the underpaid, overworked professionals who do just that.

He also sang "Almost Gone," a searing accusation written with James Raymond about the ghastly torture of Bradley Manning, the whistleblowing young soldier being pilloried by our imperial army for the "crime" of telling the truth.

Graham's epic "Winchester Cathedral" asked "how many people have died in the name of Christ?" The question was underscored with "Military Madness," reminding us that our species continues to poison and bleed itself with an unfathomable addiction to violence and war that could someday soon kill us all.

To do this kind of politics in a concert for which people have paid good money is a delicate dance. But these guys are good enough---and then some---to make it work. It is, after all, who they are, and have been, and we would expect no less.

The riverfront night was clear and clean, but global-warmed, and at one point Graham complained of the heat.

"Take off your shirt," someone yelled.

"Are you kidding," said Graham. "I'm seventy years old."

Well, yeah, but he and his brothers haven't lost a beat, and their core audience has the aura of being as fit and bright and full of life as we were way back when.

In those days, we never doubted we would live forever. In the parallel universe CSN still has the power to create, it seems we actually have.

Video: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XsBkSp6nWxg&feature=player_embedded.

20120801-01 06:01 SteveB Re: R0mney Praises Socialized Health Care (FotM Newsletter #194)

Wake up, Republicans! End the disconnect with reality NOW! For the sake of our great nation!

YES! Israel has socialized health care, just like almost all civilized nations, including our allies. And even your Republican candidate (responsible for Romneycare, himself) talks about how well socialized medicine works and what trouble the U.S. is in. 18% of GDP with poor results (study infant mortality, for instance).

Obamacare and Romneycare solve a lot of the problems and could solve a lot more. Too bad Republicans didn't assist with the much needed project, instead of trying to block it at every turn.

Because, believe me, NEITHER OBAMACARE NOR ROMNEYCARE ARE GOIN' AWAY! Even if R0mney wins (extremely unlikely).

20120801-02 11:22 Bill "The Secret of Our Un-Success"

"The Secret of Our Un-Success" by Paul Krugman, *The New York Times*

July 31, 2012, (<http://krugman.blogs.nytimes.com/2012/07/31/the-secret-of-our-un-success/?emc=eta1>)

The *Wall Street Journal* — yes, the *WSJ* — explains: "Government Cutbacks Separate This Expansion From Others." Over at Angry Bear, Spencer shows that private GDP — GDP not including government spending — has risen almost exactly as fast under Obama as during the "Bush Boom"; of course, if government spending hadn't been falling despite a weak economy, there would have been more jobs, and private spending would have risen faster.

It's really amazing: between miscalculations on Obama's part and scorched-earth Republican opposition, what we've had is insane austerity in the face of depression — yet we're having an election centered on the claim that the weak economy shows that government spending doesn't work.

FREE BIRTH CONTROL

and a bunch of other great stuff

GOES INTO EFFECT TODAY!

Beginning **AUGUST 1, 2012***
a whole range of crucial health care services will start becoming available to women with no cost-sharing like co-pays or deductibles, thanks to Pres. Obama's Affordable Care Act.

Studies show that most women don't know about all the benefits they can use in the new health care law. **If the women in your life don't know about this, they can't use the new benefits** — benefits that could save them money, time, and maybe even their lives. So please share this with everyone you know!

PLUS, THERE'S MORE!

BIRTH CONTROL IS COVERED!

All FDA-approved methods of birth control — including the pill, IUDs, and more — are now covered by insurance when prescribed by your doctor. According to a recent survey, one in three women has struggled to afford birth control, so we have to make sure we get the word out about this.

YOUR ANNUAL CHECKUPS ARE ALSO NOW COVERED.

The health care law requires insurance companies to pay for an annual "well woman" checkup, including preconception care.

NEW BENEFITS FOR NEW MOMS.

Counseling and support for breast-feeding, as well as the cost of renting equipment, is now covered.

NO MORE CO-PAYS FOR PAP SMEARS!

(Sorry, you still have to get them.) Insurance companies now have to cover Pap smears, mammograms for women over 40, HPV testing, and possibly even colon cancer screenings if your doctor thinks you should get one.

MORE SUPPORT FOR DOMESTIC VIOLENCE SURVIVORS.

Domestic violence screening and counseling is now covered. If you know a woman who is a survivor, it is critical she knows about this—it may help save her life.

CRUCIAL DISEASE SCREENING IS COVERED.

Counseling and/or screening for several diseases is now covered, including gestational diabetes, HPV, and HIV.








A ton of benefits are already in effect or will be soon. Check them out:

You can pump at work! Companies with 50 or more employees are required to make sure new moms have time and space to pump.

Being a woman will no longer be a "pre-existing condition." (Seriously, it is.) And insurance companies won't be able to charge you more just for being a woman anymore. (And boy do they.)**

Young adults can easily get coverage. Young adults mostly don't get health insurance because they can't afford it and figure they don't need it. This can be disastrous if they get sick. Now, kids under the age of 26 can stay on their parent's coverage — regardless of whether they live at home or not.

Kids with pre-existing conditions can finally get insurance. And soon adults will be able to as well. Also, insurance companies can't take away your coverage if you become too sick, and there are no lifetime limits on coverage anymore. **

There will be tax credits and subsidies to help you buy insurance. Millions of Americans are going to receive tax credits to help them get insurance if they can't afford it, and small businesses will also get credits to purchase insurance. **

Seniors are getting help with health care and medicine. Twelve million seniors are currently receiving no-cost preventive care through Medicare, and seniors receive a 50 percent discount on prescription drugs when they hit the "donut hole."

*The regulation requiring insurance companies to cover these services goes into effect on August 1 in plan years that begin on or after August 1. That means for most people, these services will kick in when your next health insurance plan year starts, which is August for most student plans and January for most employee plans.
**These will go into effect in 2014.

Have health insurance, but not sure what benefits you should be receiving? Find out state specific information and answers to other questions here: www.healthcare.gov
Want more information like this? Sign up for alerts at www.weareultraviolet.org!



ultraviolet

Equality at a Higher Frequency

"Exhaustive Study Finds Global Elite Hiding up to \$32 Trillion in Offshore Accounts" by Amy Goodman, NationofChange

Aug. 1, 2012, (<http://www.nationofchange.org/exhaustive-study-finds-global-elite-hiding-32-trillion-offshore-accounts-1343831788>)

("Mitt Romney has failed to make an economic disclosure that every president and candidate for president has made in the last 36 years.")

A new report reveals how wealthy individuals and their families have between \$21 and \$32 trillion of hidden financial assets around the world in what are known as offshore accounts or tax havens. The actual sums could be higher because the study only deals with financial wealth deposited in bank and investment accounts, and not other assets such as property and yachts. The inquiry was commissioned by the Tax Justice Network and is being touted as the most comprehensive report ever on the "offshore economy." It also finds that private banks are deeply involved in running offshore havens, with UBS, Credit Suisse and Goldman Sachs handling the most assets. We're joined by the report's author, James Henry, a lawyer and former chief economist at McKinsey & Company.

Video: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IDg0Zv4KpQY&feature=player_embedded.

Transcript

AMY GOODMAN: We turn now to a new report that reveals how wealthy individuals and their families have between \$21 and \$32 trillion of hidden financial assets around the world in what are known as offshore accounts or tax havens. The conservative estimate of \$21 trillion—conservative estimate—is as much money as the entire annual economic output of the United States and Japan combined. The actual sums could be higher because the study only deals with financial wealth deposited in bank and investment accounts, and not other assets such as property and yachts.

The inquiry was commissioned by the Tax Justice Network and is being touted as the most comprehensive report ever on the "offshore economy." It's called "The Price of Offshore Revisited." The study finds private banks are deeply involved in running offshore havens with UBS, Credit Suisse, Goldman Sachs handling the most assets offshore. According to the report, less than 100,000 people worldwide own almost \$10 trillion of the wealth held in tax havens.

To talk about the implications of these findings, we're joined by the report's author, James Henry, economist, lawyer, board member of the Tax Justice Network, former chief economist at McKinsey & Company.

Welcome to "Democracy Now!"

JAMES HENRY: Thanks very much, Amy.

AMY GOODMAN: It's great to have you with us. Tell us what you found.

JAMES HENRY: Well, the \$21 trillion figure is the headline story, that's a shock to a lot of people, actually represents about 10 to 15 percent of global wealth. So, from that standpoint, we think it's a reasonable number. But the interesting thing is that all of this wealth accrues to the top 10 million people on the planet, and a lot of it just to the top 100,000, people with assets over \$30 million per household.

The second thing that's striking about this is the role of the great international banks that we've all come to know and love, the ones you described—UBS, Credit Suisse, HSBC, JPMorgan—all these banks—Goldman—big recipients of bailout money from taxpayers, and also deeply implicated in the financial crisis of 2008 to the current period. These are the same folks that have specialized in helping the wealthiest people on the planet take their money offshore and hide it from tax authorities.

AMY GOODMAN: You talk about pirate banks.

JAMES HENRY: Right.

AMY GOODMAN: What do you mean?

JAMES HENRY: Well, I mean that this is the business of taking money and moving it to secret offshore accounts and sheltering it from taxes. For example, if you are a wealthy Mexican investor, you can hold your bank deposits in New York City in Citibank or UBS tax-free. The U.S. government doesn't collect taxes on bank deposits by nonresident aliens. And it doesn't tell the Mexican authorities that you're earning all that money. So, basically, we have designed our tax laws—the United States, the U.K., Switzerland—to become the largest tax havens in the world. The actual offshore islands, like the Caymans, are just conduits to these ultimate destinations.

AMY GOODMAN: People would say, well, we knew that about Swiss banks, but that's not the same for U.S. banks.

JAMES HENRY: Oh, yeah, absolutely. The leaders in the pack here historically have been U.K. banks, U.S. banks and Swiss banks. And so, you know, we are all upset—our Treasury is trying to get the Swiss private bankers to stop coming to the United States and taking money from wealthy Americans. But our banks have been doing the same thing for decades with respect to Latin America, the Philippines, you know, much of Africa. And that's a system that the banks have really designed.

AMY GOODMAN: Let's talk about the continent of Africa and what this means for various countries and, most importantly, the majority of the populations there.

JAMES HENRY: Yeah. Well, for example, Nigeria is supposedly a debtor country. But when you look at all the unrecorded capital outflows that have flowed out of Nigeria, it turns out that Nigeria is actually, like many other developing countries, a net creditor of the richest countries in the world. So if you add up and accumulate all the unrecorded capital flows that have accrued to the Nigerian elite, political as well as private sector, you know, the tiny share of that country's population owns a vast amount of offshore wealth. So the debt problem is not really a debt problem. It's a tax problem. Developing countries account for about a third, we estimate, of the \$21 to \$32 trillion of financial assets that's offshore.

AMY GOODMAN: Some of the critiques of the report, the investigation you did—this is from CNBC: quote, "The problem, says Dan Mitchell, a senior fellow at the Cato Institute, is that the estimate is based on a series of assumptions aimed at making people 'believe that much of cross-border investing is all about tax evasion and that all this money should go to government, and that this would be a good thing.'" That's what he says. "The real problem facing governments, Mitchell says, is spending not revenues." Your response, James Henry?

JAMES HENRY: Well, my response is that he hasn't read the report, basically. We've been very careful to estimate the size of this black hole using three different methods. We've looked individually at the top 50 banks in the world and have detailed numbers for each one of them. We've looked at 139 developing countries where we can get data on how much their unrecorded capital flows were, and we've built detailed models of those. And we looked at data published by the Bank for International Settlements. So the numbers are the best ever recorded here.

We're not suggesting that the—you know, there may not be problems on the spending side, but it's outrageous for the wealthiest people on the planet to pay zero taxes. And what this does to developing countries, in particular, because they can't tax income, because they can't tax wealth, they end up taxing low- and middle-income people with VAT taxes and sales taxes that are regressive. So, basically, what you're seeing is that globalization is driving a big hole through the nation state system that was designed to raise tax revenue.

AMY GOODMAN: Let's go to Mitt Romney, because that's why the whole issue of offshore accounts has come into the big consciousness of the overall American population right now, the presumptive Republican presidential nominee, speaking to Radio Iowa earlier this month about his foreign investments.

MITT ROMNEY: With regards to any foreign investments, I understand—and you understand, of course—that my investments have been held by a blind trust, have been managed by a trustee. I don't manage

them, don't even know where they are. Those—that trustee follows all U.S. laws. All the taxes are paid, as appropriate. All of them have been reported to the government. There's nothing hidden there. There's nothing—if, for instance, you own shares in, let's say, Renault or in Fiat, you still have to pay taxes, you still have to disclose that in the United States.

AMY GOODMAN: That's Mitt Romney. James Henry?

JAMES HENRY: Yeah, well, he's not alone. That's one estimate—one indication of our report. You know, basically, you're looking at behavior that's engaged in by a lot of Mitt Romneys, and, you know, essentially, the United States is facing kind of a stark choice in this election between the first president in history who, you know, has really had offshore accounts like this. You know, a lot of us who are tax experts—and not necessarily Democrats, by any means—just wonder what the heck is he hiding there. There must be something. You know, John McCain released 23 years of his tax reports, tax returns. Romney is still stopping with 2010. So, if there's no problem, just release the returns.

AMY GOODMAN: I want to go more to Mitt Romney's—the issue of his hidden wealth. He was speaking to "Face the Nation". Senator Dick Durbin of Illinois challenged Mitt Romney to be more transparent with his finances.

SEN. DICK DURBIN: Mitt Romney has failed to make an economic disclosure that every president and candidate for president has made in the last 36 years. Goes back to his father, who disclosed 12 years of tax returns. He's disclosed one. Secondly, he is the first and only candidate for president of the United States with a Swiss bank account, with tax shelters, with tax avoidance schemes that involve so many foreign countries. And the third is that when it comes down to his Swiss bank account, there is just no way to explain it. You either get a Swiss bank account to conceal what you're doing, or you believe the Swiss franc is stronger than the American dollar.

AMY GOODMAN: That's Senator Durbin. James Henry?

JAMES HENRY: Well, I think that he's absolutely right. We should demand disclosure. This is a situation where you have essentially representation without taxation, not only for individuals, but also for corporations that are able to move their money offshore, conceal it and then come back to Washington and have enormous political impact on the system, spending their money under *Citizens United*. You know, Romney is just one kind of stellar example of that.

AMY GOODMAN: Name more names of the banks, who people should be watching for. And what do you think should be done about this?

JAMES HENRY: Good example is HSBC. They're number three on our list, a big U.K. bank. They recently had a deferred prosecution agreement with the Department of Justice for laundering \$14 billion of cartel drug money. They got off with a \$1 billion parking ticket, and their profits per year are about \$20 billion. So, you know, this is the Obama administration basically deciding not to close this bank, even though investigators that I've talked to at the bank—who have looked at the bank closely, say this is like BCCI in the '90s. The only difference is that that was a Pakistani bank, which we decided to close down.

HSBC is just one of the top 10 banks on this list. Collectively, those 10 banks manage about \$6.3 trillion of the \$12.3 trillion that we located in these top 50 banks. So, you know, the other names on the list, you've mentioned—UBS, Credit Suisse, HSBC, JPMorgan, Pictet, Deutsche Bank, BNP Paribas, Barclays. These are the—

AMY GOODMAN: What about large corporations? You talk about intellectual—moving intellectual property offshore—

JAMES HENRY: Yeah.

AMY GOODMAN: —corporations like Google and Pfizer.

JAMES HENRY: Right. Well, in our film, *We're Not Broke*, which was a Sundance documentary, we discussed corporate tax evasion. And this is the latest trend in the software industry and also in the healthcare industry, drug industry. Pfizer, Google, Microsoft, companies like General Electric are parking their intellectual property, their brands and software, offshore in places like Bermuda and paying royalties to themselves and essentially parking the profits in these low-tax jurisdictions and not paying any taxes on it. So, Google last year saved about \$3 billion by that. So if you have, you know, this core kind of value, intellectual capital, moving offshore to low-tax havens, where it's never been produced, essentially is a kind of, you know, decapitalization of the U.S. And all of these countries now also parked all these profits abroad to get tax breaks, and then they want a deal when they bring the money back. They want a repatriation tax cut, 5 percent.

AMY GOODMAN: So, what should happen?

JAMES HENRY: Well, we've tried this repatriation tax cut in 2004. It didn't produce any jobs. And we shouldn't—absolutely shouldn't get in—the corporate—give in to this lobby. The corporate income taxes and personal income taxes have dropped steadily since the 1980s on high-income corporations. And, you know, at the same time, we've seen the growth of this offshore haven. So it isn't driven by tax rates; it's driven by greed.

AMY GOODMAN: James Henry, why did you decide to do this report? I mean, you were chief economist at McKinsey, which isn't so different from Bain, in some ways, a major business consultancy.

JAMES HENRY: Right. Well, I've done a few things since then. And I think—you know, I'm on the global board of Tax Justice Network, which is an organization that's grown up in the last decade to fight offshore havens. And we are dedicated volunteers working on this problem of global tax justice. This is vital to democracy, as well as to the tax system, because if you can't have fair taxes, you end up having representation without taxation. And I think the poorest countries in the world are forced to rely on very regressive taxes to pay their bills.

AMY GOODMAN: We're going to link to your report, James Henry, economist, lawyer, board member of Tax Justice Network, former chief economist at McKinsey & Company, author of the report, "The Price of Offshore Revisited."

"The Price of Offshore Revisited" by James S. Henry, Tax Justice Network

July, 2012, (http://www.taxjustice.net/cms/upload/pdf/Price_of_Offshore_Revisited_120722.pdf)

(New estimates for "missing" global private wealth, income, inequality, and lost taxes.)

"At dinner they did discourse very finely to us of the probability that there is a vast deal of money hid in the land." —Samuel Pepys, Diary (1663)

"Dye mon, gen mon." —Haitian proverb

"There's something out there...and it's GROWING!" —Ripley

1. INTRODUCTION/ SUMMARY

The definition of victory for this paper is to review and improve upon existing estimates of the size, growth and distribution of untaxed private wealth protected and serviced by the global offshore industry.

This is necessarily an exercise in night vision. The subterranean system that we are trying to measure is the economic equivalent of an astrophysical black hole.

Like those black holes, this one is virtually invisible and can be somewhat perilous to observers who venture too close. So, like astronomers, researchers on this topic have necessarily used indirect methods to do their estimates, conducting their measurements from a respectful distance. This indirect approach is painstaking, and has many inherent limitations, as we'll see.

Unlike in the field of astrophysics, however, the invisibility here is fundamentally man-made. Private sector secrecy and the official government policies that protect it have placed most of the data that we need directly off limits -- even though it is, in principle, readily available.

In many ways, the crucial policy question is -- what are the costs and benefits of all this secrecy?

Another key theme that emerges from this paper is that there is an urgent need for tax justice advocates and their allies in governments and in the public, especially in "source" countries where the wealth is coming from, to press the relevant authorities for this information.

The very existence of the global offshore industry, and the tax-free status of the enormous sums invested by their wealthy clients, is predicated on secrecy: that is what this industry really "supplies" as it competes for, conceals, and manages private capital from all over the planet, from any and all sources, no questions asked.

We are up against one of society's most well-entrenched interest groups. After all, there's no interest group more rich and powerful than the rich and powerful, who are the ultimate subjects of our research.

The first step, however, are the estimates. The way is hard, the work is tedious, the data mining is as mind-numbing as any day below surface at the coal face, and the estimates are subject to maddening, irreducible uncertainties.

Nevertheless, as usual, some things may be said.

New Estimates. As discussed below, previous estimates of the size and growth of the offshore industry to date have relied on rough judgments and rules of thumb or, at best, on one or two very simple estimation methods.

We triangulated on our estimates from the vantage point of several different methods. The aim is not pseudo-precision, much less "really big numbers," but to identify a plausible "base case" for this otherwise-well hidden sector of the global economy.

A More Open Process. Another objective is to keep a sharp eye out for the puzzles surfaced by this data analysis, of which there are many. A key problem with previous estimates is sensationalism. That is to be expected, given the subject matter, and the fact that estimation is still dominated by relatively closed communities of consulting firms, government agencies, or NGOs.

An important aim of this project is to establish a more open, transparent, collaborative model for doing such research so that the data sources, estimation methods, and core assumptions are all exposed to the sunlight of peer review, and ultimately to public scrutiny.

Estimation Methods. As discussed below in more detail, this paper employs four key estimation approaches:

1. A "sources-and-uses" model for country-by-country unrecorded capital flows.
2. An "accumulated offshore wealth" model.
3. An "offshore investor portfolio" model.
4. Direct estimates of offshore assets at the world's top 50 global private banks.

To compile its estimates, the paper uses latest available data from the World Bank and IMF, the UN, central banks, and national accounts to explicitly model capital flows for each member of a subgroup of 139 key "source" countries that publish such data.

The paper goes further, supplementing these models with other evidence, including:

1. Data on so-called "transfer mispricing."
2. Data on the cross-border demand for liquid "mattress money" like reserve currency and gold, part of which may move through offshore markets.

3. A review of market research by leading consulting firms on the size of the "offshore" private banking market. (See Section 5, below, for more details.)

We believe that the resulting estimates of unrecorded capital flows and accumulated offshore wealth are the most rigorous and comprehensive ever produced.¹ In the spirit of open research, we hereby issue an open challenge to the IMF and the World Bank -- to all comers, in fact -- to see if they can come up with better estimates.

1. KEY FINDINGS

1. Overall Size

A significant fraction of global private financial wealth -- by our estimates, at least **\$21 to \$32 trillion** as of 2010 - has been invested virtually tax-free *through* the world's still-expanding black hole of more than 80 "offshore" secrecy jurisdictions. We believe this range to be conservative, for reasons discussed below.

Remember: this is just financial wealth. A big share of the real estate, yachts, racehorses, gold bricks -- and many other things that count as non-financial wealth -- are also owned via offshore structures where it is impossible to identify the owners. These are outside the scope of this report.

On this scale, this "offshore economy" is large enough to have a major impact on estimates of inequality of wealth and income, on estimates of national income and debt ratios; and -- most importantly -- to have very significant negative impacts on the domestic tax bases of key "source" countries (that is, countries that have seen net unrecorded private capital outflows over time.²)

2. Our 139-country focus group: who are the real debtors?

We have focused on a subgroup of 139 mainly low-middle income "source" countries³ for which the World Bank and IMF have sufficient external debt data.

Our estimates for this group underscore how misleading it is to regard countries as "debtors" only by looking at one side of their balance sheets.

Since the 1970s, with eager (and often aggressive and illegal) assistance from the international private banking industry, it appears that private elites in this sub-group of 139 countries had accumulated **\$7.3 to \$9.3 trillion of unrecorded offshore wealth** in 2010, conservatively estimated, even while many of their public sectors were borrowing themselves into bankruptcy, enduring agonizing "structural adjustment" and low growth, and holding fire sales of public assets.

These same source countries had aggregate gross external debt of **\$4.08 trillion** in 2010.

However, once we subtract these countries' foreign reserves, most of which are invested in First World securities, their aggregate net external debts were **minus \$2.8 trillion** in 2010. (This dramatic picture has been increasing steadily since 1998, the year when the external debts minus foreign reserves was at its peak for these 139 countries, at +\$1.43 trillion.⁴)

So in total, by way of the offshore system, these supposedly indebted "source countries" -- including all key developing countries -- **are not debtors at all: they are net lenders, to the tune of \$10.1 to \$13.1 trillion** at end-2010.

The problem here is that the assets of these countries are held by a small number of wealthy individuals while the debts are shouldered by the ordinary people of these countries through their governments.

As a U.S. Federal Reserve official observed back in the 1980s: "The real problem is not that these countries don't have any assets. The problem is, they're all in Miami (and, he might have added, New York, London, Geneva, Zurich, Luxembourg, Singapore, and Hong Kong)"

These private unrecorded offshore assets and the public debts are intimately linked, historically speaking: the dramatic increase in unrecorded capital outflows (and the private demand for First World currency and other assets) in the 1970s and 1980s was positively correlated with a surge in First World loans to developing countries: much of this borrowing left these countries under the table within months, and even weeks, of being disbursed.⁵

Today, local elites continue to “vote with their financial feet” while their public sectors borrow heavily abroad -- but it is First World countries that are doing most of the borrowing. It is these frequently heavily indebted source countries and their elites that have become their financiers.

In terms of tackling poverty, it is hard to imagine a more pressing global issue to address.

3. How this wealth is concentrated.

Much of this wealth appears to be concentrated in the hands of private elites that reside in a handful of source countries -- many of which are still regarded officially as “debtors.”

By our estimates, of the \$7.3 - \$9.3 trillion of offshore wealth belonging to residents of these 139 countries, **the top 10 countries account for 61 percent** and **the top 20 for 81 percent.** (See Appendix 3 for more details.)

4. Untaxed Offshore Earnings start to swamp outflows.

Our estimates also correct the sanguine view that since new outflows of capital appear to have recently declined from countries like Mexico and Brazil, capital flight is no longer a problem for these countries.

Once we take into account the growth of large untaxed earnings on accumulated offshore wealth, it turns out that from 1970 to 2010 the real value (in \$2000) of these earnings alone may be as much as \$3.7 trillion -- equivalent to about 60 percent of the global total unrecorded capital outflows during this period.⁶ For Latin America, Sub-Saharan Africa and the Middle East that have long histories of accumulating offshore wealth and unreported earnings abroad, the ratio is close to 100 percent or more.

By shifting attention from flows to accumulated stocks of foreign wealth, this paper calls attention to the fact that retention of investment earnings abroad can easily become so significant that initial outflows are eventually replaced by “hidden flight,” with the hidden stock of unrecorded private wealth generating enough unreported income to keep it growing long after the initial outflows have dried up.

5. Offshore earnings swamp foreign investment.

Another key finding is that once we fully account for capital outflows and the lost stream of future earnings on the associated offshore investments, foreign direct and equity investment flows are almost entirely offset -- even for some of the world’s largest recipients of foreign investment.

6. Wide open and “efficient” capital markets: how traditional theories failed.

Standard development economics assumes that financial capital will flow predominantly from “capital-rich” high-saving rich countries to “capital-scarce” countries where returns on investment are higher.

But for many countries the global financial system seems to have enabled private investor motives -- understandable ones like asset diversification along with less admirable ones like tax evasion -- to swamp the conventional theory. Reducing frictions in global finance, which was supposed to help capital flow in to capital-starved developing countries more easily and efficiently, seems to have encouraged capital to flow out. This raises new questions about how ‘efficient’ frictionless global capital markets are.

7. The active role of private banks.

Our analysis refocuses attention on the critical, often unsavory role that global private banks play. A detailed analysis of the top 50 international private banks reveals that at the end of 2010 these 50 collectively managed more than **\$12.1 trillion** in cross-border invested assets from private clients, including via trusts and foundations. Consider the role of smaller banks, investment houses, insurance companies, and non-bank intermediaries like hedge funds and independent money managers in the offshore cross-border market, plus self-managed funds, and this figure seems consistent with our overall offshore asset estimates of US\$21-\$32 trillion.

A disproportionate share of these assets was managed by major global banks that are well known for their role in the 2008 financial crisis, their generous government bailouts and bountiful executive compensation packages. We can now add this to their list of distinctions: they are key players in many havens around the globe, and key enablers of the global tax injustice system.

It is interesting to note that despite choppy markets the rank order at the top of the private banking world has been remarkably stable -- key recent trends have been for an increased role for independent boutique money managers and hedge funds, and a shift toward banks with a strong Asian presence.

8. Offshore Investor Portfolios.

Based on a simple model of offshore investor portfolio behavior, data from the Bank for International Settlements (BIS), and interviews with private bankers and wealth industry analysts, this yields a "scale-up" factor that is also consistent with the aggregate range for 2010 noted earlier.

A simple model, based on a combination of BIS data on cross-border deposits and other asset holdings by "non-bank" investors, an analysis of portfolio mix assumptions made by wealth industry analysts, and interviews with actual private banks, suggests an overall multiplier of 3.0 to scale up our cross-border deposits figure to total financial assets. This is very conservative.

9. New Revenue Sources for Global Needs.

Finally, if we could figure out how to tax all this offshore wealth without killing the proverbial Golden Goose, or at least entice its owners to reinvest it back home, this sector of the global underground is also easily large enough to make a significant contribution to tax justice, investment, and paying the costs of global problems like climate change.

10. Other estimates.

In compiling the evidence for this paper, we've had a chance to examine other recent work by analysts. We find a number of shortcomings, particularly in methods that rely heavily on studies of intra-company transfer pricing. Section 4, below, explores this in more detail.

2. WHERE IS "OFFSHORE," ANYWAY?

Since the late 1970s, investigative journalists, tax authorities, drug enforcement officials, terrorist trackers, and national security experts -- and a few economists -- have gradually become aware that there is indeed a "vast deal of money" -- a large and growing chunk of the world's private wealth and income -- hidden out there, not so much "in the land," but "offshore," protected by a highly-paid, industrious bevy of and investment industries, taking advantage of the increasingly borderless, frictionless global economy.

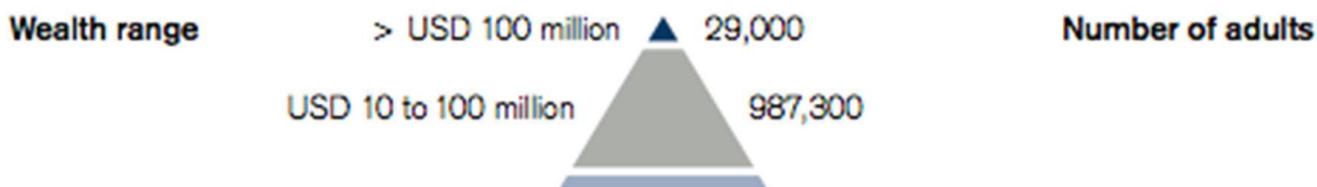
Grade-school geography conditions us to think of "offshore" as a physical location. Indeed, some "residential havens" like Singapore and Switzerland do specialize in providing secure low-tax physical residences to the world's wealthiest people, along with expensive private schools, hospitals, and resorts to enhance the family dynasties' human capital, and highly secure storage facilities for private collections of art, gold, jewels, classic cars, yachts, planes, weapons and other trinkets.

However, private banking has long since become virtual. So the term "offshore" refers not so much to the actual physical location of private assets or liabilities, but to nominal, hyper-portable, multi-jurisdictional, often quite temporary locations of *networks of legal and quasi-legal entities and arrangements* that manage and control private wealth -- always in the interests of those who manage it, supposedly in the interests of its beneficial owners, and often in indifference or outright defiance of the interests and laws of multiple nation states. A painting or a bank account may be located inside Switzerland's borders, but the all-important legal structure that owns it -- typically that asset would be owned by an anonymous offshore company in one jurisdiction, which is in turn owned by a trust in another jurisdiction, whose trustees are in yet another jurisdiction (and that is one of the simplest offshore structures) -- is likely to be fragmented in many pieces around the globe.

Ultimately, then, the term "offshore" refers to a set of capabilities. The key clients for the offshore system include the world's wealthiest individuals and companies, as well as its worst villains. Numbering just a few million of the world's 6.5 billion people, they are an incredibly diverse group, from 30-year old Chinese real estate speculators and Silicon-Valley software tycoons to Dubai oil sheiks, Russian Presidents, mineral-rich African dictators and Mexican drug lords.

Number of high net worth individuals, 2011

Source: James Davies, Rodrigo Lluberas and Anthony Shorrocks, Credit Suisse Global Wealth Databook 2011



From a slight distance, all these players share the same basic needs:

1. Anonymity for them, their families, and their business and political dealings.
2. The ability to minimize the net present value of future taxes, net of tax avoidance costs.
3. Investment management, for those who still believe in it.
4. Ability to easily access and manage their wealth from anywhere on the planet.
5. Secure places to hang out, hide out and enjoy life.
6. Iron-clad financial security for their huge stocks of anonymously-owned, largely-untaxed private assets, against the continuing threats posed not only by tax men and prosecutors, but also by kidnappers, extortionists, spies, hit men, con men, hackers, paparazzi, political opponents, disgruntled family members, ex-wives, ex-lovers, and each other.

It is these core capabilities -- secrecy, tax minimization, access, asset management, and security -- that our modern "offshore" system offers. In the last 30 years a sophisticated transnational private infrastructure of service providers has grown up to deliver these services on an unprecedented scale. This "pirate banking" system now launders, shelters, manages and if necessary re-domiciles the riches of many of the world's worst villains, as well as the tangible and intangible assets and liabilities of many of our wealthiest individuals, alongside our most successful mainstream banks, corporations, shipping companies, insurance companies, accounting firms and law firms.

All these players have become, as it were, citizens of a brave new virtual country -- one that lack physical boundaries but can still offer escape routes from many of the taxes, financial regulations, human rights standards, and moral restraints that the rest of us take for granted: the responsibilities of society. One set of rules for a tiny minority of rich and powerful people; another set for everyone else.

The disturbing reality is that little of this analysis is new: critics like me have been discussing this structural defect in the world economy and development finance since at least the 1980s.⁷ The Tax Justice Network has been talking about it for a decade. Since the recent financial crisis began in late 2007 world leaders have paid more attention -- at least rhetorically. At a summit in London the G20 declared on April 2, 2009 that "the era of bank secrecy is over," endorsed a new toolbox of measures to be used against jurisdictions that fail to comply with international

standards, and promised to “develop proposals to help developing countries secure the benefits of a new cooperative tax environment by the end of 2009.”

It should have been a warning to us all that the blacklist of tax havens produced by the OECD, which was supposed to be in the frontline of the global fight against tax haven secrecy, was empty on April 7, 2009 -- just *five days* after that dramatic G20 statement.

It remains empty. The tax havens are now supposedly ‘clean.’ Meanwhile, the private banking operations of global banks remain among their most profitable divisions.

Subsequent G20s seem to have obsessed with debt burdens created by the crisis and seem to have lost interest in cracking down on havens: and leaders in the UK, Canada, and the US have used the crisis to make the case for cutting taxes still farther. When it briefly appeared in 2010 that the crisis was ebbing, conservative leaders also argued that the time for anti-haven “hysteria” was over.

Overall, therefore, the lesson for haven reform is that we should not lean too heavily on cyclical moods. The haven system played a significant role in aggravating our latest, mainly First World crisis, by facilitating badly under-regulated cross-border lending, hedge funds, and insurance. But the serious harms that the offshore system creates been around for decades, chronically affecting many of the world’s poorest countries, and over time undermining tax justice in rich and poor countries alike.

3. THE GLOBAL HAVEN INDUSTRY

Given this “virtual geography” perspective, it is important to emphasize several structural facts about the “offshore” industry, as we work on our estimates.

First, it is important to distinguish between the “intermediary havens” which act as conduits for wealth and “destination havens” where private wealth ultimately ends up.

We typically associate offshore legal entities like shell companies, asset protection trusts, captive insurance companies, and haven banks with the conventional list of “offshore havens” (or “Treasure Islands”) found on, say, early 2000s OECD blacklists: sultry, dodgy tropical islands like Bermuda, the Cayman Islands, Nauru, St. Kitts, Antigua, and Tortola; or the European bolt holes such as Switzerland, the Channel Islands, Monaco, Cyprus, Gibraltar, and Liechtenstein. These 80-odd front-line havens, most of which are “offshore” by anyone’s definition, collectively provide a home to over 60 million people, and over 3.5 million paper companies, thousands of shell banks and insurance companies, more than half of the world’s registered commercial ships above 100 tons, and tens of thousands of shell subsidiaries for the world’s largest banks, accounting firms, and energy, software, drug, and defense companies.

In the 1970s-90s, as multinational corporations (MNCs), banks, investors, and a variety of First and Third World scalawags demanded haven services, the elites in these tiny ersatz states discovered they could make a darn good living simply by turning a blind eye. Their numbers roughly tripled during these years.

However, as the Tax Justice Network has recently emphasized in its work on its Financial Secrecy Index since 2009, this conventional list of havens is misleading, if we’re interested in “finding the money.” For, while there are millions of companies and thousands of thinly capitalized banks in these fiscal paradises, few wealthy people want to depend on them to manage and secure their wealth. These stealthy investors ultimately need access to all the primary benefits of “high-cost” First World capital markets -- relatively efficient, regulated securities markets, banks backstopped by large populations of taxpayers, and insurance companies; well-developed legal codes, competent attorneys, independent judiciaries, and the rule of law. Generally, these can only be found in a handful of so-called First World countries like the US, the UK, Switzerland, the Netherlands, Belgium/Luxembourg, and Germany. So we have to look to these “destination havens” in order to get a handle on the size and growth of unrecorded cross-border private wealth.

Second, the private “enablers” play a critical role in this market, one that cuts across individual havens. Investing and securing large amounts of private wealth across borders is complex, requiring specialized skills in tax, financial planning, banking, entity structuring, and estate planning. This is not something that most wealthy people undertake on their own. As noted, therefore, a global services industry of law firms, accountants, insurance companies, and especially private banks has grown up to cater to this cross-border market.

While it has thousands of players, the room at the top is surprisingly limited -- global accounting is still dominated by the “Big Four,” while a small number of “capital city” and haven-based law firms dominant the lawyering, and global private banking is dominated by less than 50 multinational banks. For our estimates this is quite helpful, because it yields another metric that can be used to triangulate on the size of the offshore market.

Third, another key development since the late 1990s is the growth of the “onshore- offshore” market for secrecy and tax avoidance, especially in the United States. From Delaware to Alaska, Nevada, and South Dakota, a growing number of states are offering asset protection trusts” whose levels of secrecy, protection against creditors, and tax advantages rival those of the world’s traditional secretive offshore havens. The widespread use of the likes of the Nevada LLC or the Delaware asset protection trust, in the supposedly ‘onshore’ United States, further undermines the traditional association of “offshore” with particular physical locations, and underscores the fact that the *cross-border flows* examined in this paper may be just the tip of the iceberg.

4. OLD ESTIMATES

The History and Politics of Estimation

As Lord Kelvin, the discoverer of absolute zero on the temperature scale, once noted, “If you cannot express it in numbers, your knowledge is of a meager and unsatisfactory kind.”

Since the late 1970s, a growing number of economists have acknowledged the existence of the subterranean economy and have begun to use a variety of methods to estimate its size, growth rate, and composition more precisely.

The first phase of this estimation work, in which the author was deeply involved, is provided in Appendix 1: “The Pre-History of Offshore Estimates.” This attempted to identify the size and growth of the *domestic* underground economies in leading First World countries by analyzing *anomalies* in the demand for currency and other monetary that were wildly disproportionate to transaction demand, or weird inter-regional currency flows in the U.S. Federal Reserve System.⁸

This initial phase of economic research on the “underground economy” was very successful in identifying the fact that this sector was generally large, vibrant and growing, relative to above-ground economic activity in many countries. It led to a brief period in which official institutions like the US Congress, the Treasury, and the Federal Reserve collaborated actively with the author and other researchers, providing access to internal data, venues for testimony, and even support for new regulations -- like the U.S. Treasury’s new reporting requirements for US currency turned into banks, adopted quickly in 1977-79 after the author and other analysts discovered that banks in Florida and Texas near the U.S.’ southern border with Mexico were receiving an inordinate amount of \$100 bills.

This early research led us to notice that -- contrary to the basic assumptions of development economics -- there were very large gross and net flows from the developing world to OECD countries: not only in the form of demand for reserve assets like currency and gold, but also for ordinary financial assets.

Unfortunately, however, once we opened the doors on these previously-hidden hidden cross-border flows of bank deposits and other assets in the early 1980s the US Treasury, the Federal Reserve, the US Congress, other Western governments and the OECD, as well as the global big bank lobby, suddenly became much less cooperative. That remains the situation today.⁹

What we had uncovered was the existence of a highly lucrative banking business that had previously not been disclosed in any bank’s annual reports, let alone in Treasury or Federal Reserve data bases or Congressional

inquiries -- even though this had actually become the big banks' *most lucrative* (highest risk-adjusted ROE) business *by far*.

This was the offshore business of "international private banking," whose core mission basically consisted of having reliable, secure, top-tier, "too big to fail" First World banks entice the elites of rich and poor countries alike to shelter their wealth tax-free offshore, usually in contravention of these home countries' laws, in many cases while lending heavily to the governments and banks of those very same "source" countries.

It soon became clear to this author that -- in striking contrast to the situation with respect to currency demand or even the question of "where loans to developing countries went" -- securing any direct evidence on which countries generated the largest capital outflows, where private flight capital ended up, and how much it was worth, would be almost impossible without a combination of detailed case-by-case investigations and laborious indirect data triangulation.

That was 26 years ago. Since then the global offshore industry has more than quadrupled in size.

The Missing Data

Like the labyrinth of the minotaur, the secrets of the offshore industry have many levels of protection. First, of course, private bankers, haven lawyers and accountants get paid handsomely to hide their clients' assets, identities, and even behavioral patterns. Collectively, they also maintain influential lobbies.

Second, bank regulators and central banks of most individual countries typically view private banks as key clients. So they have long permitted the world's top havens and banks to conceal the ultimate origins and ownership of assets under their supervision, especially those held in "off-balance sheet" trusts and fiduciary accounts.

Third, even though multilateral institutions like the Bank for International Settlements (BIS), the IMF, the World Bank, and the OECD that are supposed to be somewhat insulated from the political fray, they have been highly sensitive to the collective interests of "Wall Street & Co." They have never been willing to require financial institutions to fully report their cross-border customer liabilities, deposits, customer assets under management or under custody, by sector and country of origin, even at an aggregate country level.¹⁰

Interestingly, however, the BIS does gather such pair-wise detail for quarterly cross-border bank assets and loans, because it considers this useful for monitoring the stability of global banking system. It would technically be quite easy to collect the same data on the liability side, and to extend it to off-balance sheet customer assets and liabilities under management, administration, and custody.

But apparently the BIS considers the stability of developing-country finances a lower priority.

A detailed summary of the holes in existing official data with respect to sizing the offshore industry is provided in Appendix III.¹¹

Old Estimates -- "Capital Flight"

Since at least 1984, macroeconomists have toiled to refine the methods used to estimate capital flight and to extend it to a growing number of developing countries.¹² Oddly, two of the earliest studies of capital flight were by two IMF economists¹³ and by economists at Morgan Guaranty Trust, the precursor to today's JPMorganChase -- a long-time key player in global private banking.¹⁴ Unfortunately, however, none of these studies focused on sizing or locating the stock of "offshore" wealth resulting from all this capital flight, or on estimating the size of the offshore industry. Still, the consensus of more than a dozen such studies is that hundreds of billions of dollars fled the developing world during this period -- though a significant portion of the outflow were found to have been "round-tripped" back into those countries, particularly high-growth developing countries like China.

Old (Ad Hoc) Estimates -- Consulting Firms

Absent direct evidence on the size and growth of offshore, in the interim, part of the estimation gap has been filled by a series of imprecise “guesstimates” by various management consulting firms, all with large-scale banking practices.

The first of these, by Merrill Lynch/Cap Gemini in 1997, relied on rough judgment and “a wide variety” of unspecified sources. It estimated the size of “offshore wealth owned by high-net worth individuals” (HNWIs) at \$5.5 trillion in 1996, supposedly up from just \$2.3 trillion in 1989.¹⁵ A year later they estimated the figure for 1997 was \$5.8 trillion. After that, they stopped making specific offshore estimates, while continuing to publish an annual World Wealth Report that provides estimates of total financial wealth -- presumably offshore and domestic -- for high-net-worth individuals.

Although Merrill Lynch, acquired by BankAmerica during the financial crisis, has recently dropped out of wealth estimation, CapGemini continues to publish its ad hoc estimates. It has also been joined by Boston Consulting Group (BCG), McKinsey, and various smaller service providers to the private banking market. For example, in 2008 the Oliver Wyman Group, a financial consultant, estimated the global offshore private wealth owned by high-net worth individuals at \$8 trillion as of 2007.¹⁶ In June 2009 BCG estimated the volume of liquid offshore assets under management in 2008 at \$6.7 trillion, down from a peak of \$7.2 trillion in 2007.¹⁷ Scorpio Partners has also entered the fray with a long series of ad hoc estimates of its own.

A close look at these consulting studies finds many glaring omissions. For example, BCG’s 2009 estimates not only left out all of Africa, but all non-financial offshore assets held by trusts and foundations, which are typically a very large share of HNWI portfolios.¹⁸ Indeed, as we’ll see, the actual size of offshore financial wealth is far higher than any of these consultants claim.

Old Estimates -- Governments and NGOs

Given the importance of the economic development and tax policy issues at stake here, one might have thought that the IMF and the World Bank would have devoted at least a few of their thousands of economist-person years to studying this issue.

To date, however, we can only find one explicit IMF estimate of the stock of “offshore private assets” -- a modest \$1.7 trillion figure for 2000, with no clear methodology.¹⁹ In 2001 a former IMF Director of Fiscal Affairs did cite a “\$5-\$7 trillion” figure for the volume of offshore private assets, but declined to offer any more details.²⁰

In 2000 the U.S. State Department/s Bureau for International Narcotics estimated the assets of 50 offshore jurisdictions at \$4.8 trillion.²¹ Then the OECD, which has supposedly been working on “harmful tax competition” by offshore havens since 1998,²² also in 2007 endorsed a “\$5-\$7 trillion” range.²³ Around the time of the April 2009 G20 conference in London, when global anti-haven sentiments were raging, the OECD temporarily boosted its estimate to \$11 trillion, without offering a clear methodology.²⁴ But by September 2009 the OECD had retreated to summarizing a wide range of estimates produced by others.²⁵

As for NGOs, since the early 2000s there has been a rising crescendo of estimates related to the size of offshore.

- In 2000 **Oxfam** published a rough “\$6 to \$7 trillion” estimate for all private offshore wealth, without any further details.²⁶
- In 2005, a quick-and-dirty analysis by the Tax Justice Network (TJN,) entitled “The Price of Offshore,” estimated the value offshore private wealth at \$11.5 trillion as of June 2004, of which \$9.5 trillion supposedly consisted of offshore financial assets and \$2 trillion was non-residential offshore real estate. TJN used an interesting methodology that we will return to and expand on below.²⁷ Until now, this is still the largest published estimate for total offshore wealth.²⁸
- In 2009, the author developed estimates of the volume of capital flight and the value of offshore financial assets derived from leading developing countries for Oxfam GB, a document that was distributed at the April 2009 G20 summit in London, albeit rather quietly.²⁹

That study employed a version of the conventional "sources and uses" methods used by the author for global capital flight estimates published in his 1996 study of "bankers and money launderers." To that basic method, the author added the notion of estimating the net value of "offshore wealth" accumulated by developing countries, first outlined at a TJN / AABA Conference in Essex in the UK, in 2006-2008.

The study estimated that during the period 1970 to 2007 at least \$150- \$200 billion of unrecorded private capital flight flowed out of the developing world each year. Using conservative assumptions about reinvestment rates and investment yields, these flows suggested that accumulated offshore wealth stock owned by developing country residents was worth at least \$6.2 trillion by 2007. This included only wealth from developing countries, which is at most 25 to 30 percent of all offshore private wealth.³⁰

This large figure for developing country wealth alone implied that total offshore private wealth was much higher than other estimates, and it implied that developing countries might be losing as much as \$120-\$160 billion per year in lost tax revenue on the interest and other income generated by all this unreported anonymous wealth -- more than the entire global total of foreign aid from OECD countries. Most of this unreported income was either retained abroad and reinvested or spent on shopping trips in Paris, London or Miami.

It was also interesting to compare this initial \$6.2 trillion estimate for developing country "flight wealth" with the \$3.4 trillion gross foreign debt owed by all developing (low- and middle-income) countries as of 2007. After taking flight wealth into account, therefore, **it became even clearer that developing countries as a whole didn't really face a "debt" problem, but a huge "offshore tax evasion" problem.**

On a "net of foreign reserves" debt basis, the situation was even more striking. After allowing for foreign reserves owned by developing countries, as of 2007, the most recent year for which the data was then available, low-and middle-income developing countries as a group had *minus* \$415.1 billion of net foreign debt -- even before taking this offshore flight wealth into account. The negative number is mainly because higher-growth countries like China and India have managed to accumulate over \$2.5 trillion of reserves. Even omitting China and India, by 2007 all other developing countries owed just \$979 billion of net-of-reserves foreign debt, compared to \$5.3 trillion of non-Chinese offshore flight wealth.³¹

Another offshore activity that has recently been the subject of increased estimation efforts by economists is corporate transfer mispricing. This work focuses on the fact that in addition to capital flight and offshore haven abuse by individual taxpayers, there has also been a trend for MNCs to slash their corporate taxes by shifting profits and royalty payments to low-tax havens and losses and interest expense to high-tax jurisdictions. For example, according to the IRS, report, from 1994 to 2004 US companies more than tripled their foreign profits, parking nearly 60 percent of it in tax havens.³²

Some of these transfer pricing abuses have to do with over-invoicing of goods imports and under-invoicing goods exports, so as to minimize income in higher-tax countries and shift unreported profits abroad. Other transfer pricing abuses involve the (below-market) transfer of intellectual property rights (know-how, brand value, films, patents, and software) to low-tax jurisdictions.

Accordingly Global Financial Integrity (GFI) since 2006 have published a series of estimates of gross financial outflows from developing countries that rely heavily on estimates of goods transfer mispricing. In 2008 Christian Aid estimated the annual cost of such corporate transfer mispricing to developing countries, in terms of lost tax revenues, at \$160 billion per year.³³ These losses are supposedly in addition to the lost tax revenue on unreported individual income, offshore interest and dividends due to unrecorded flight.

For our purposes, these estimates of transfer mispricing *flows* do not lead directly to estimates of the size and growth of offshore private wealth *stocks or unreported income* generated by these stocks. They are subject to many technical problems -- for example, GFI's estimates pertain only to flows, not stocks or investment earnings; they leave out all negative numbers from the calculations; and in most cases they only date back to the year 2000.³⁴ However, they have certainly helped dramatize this aspect of the offshore problem.

Summary: Key Limitations, Existing Estimates

All told, these early estimates of offshore activity reflect a growing consensus that offshore wealth and the income that it generates are significant and growing, and that they are largely missing from official statistics, conventional estimates of income and wealth inequality, and most important, the global tax base.

However, the flurry of estimates produced to date have many limitations.

- **Fuzzy Methods.** In many cases the estimation methodology has been ad hoc and sometimes judgment-based, making it difficult for independent observers to replicate and verify it.
- **Technical Errors and Omissions.** In some cases, whole categories of offshore wealth have been omitted -- for example, in the case of the consulting studies noted above, assets held in trusts and foundations for private beneficiaries are omitted entirely. In other cases, such as GFI's transfer pricing analysis, we have seen outright -- if "fruitful" -- technical errors.
- **Under-Used Data.** A variety of other potentially relevant, publically accessible data types have not yet been brought to bear the task of estimating the size, growth, and distribution of offshore activity -- for example, certain data on cross-border investments in BIS reports; data on local holdings of currency, gold, and other "liquid" wealth; the composition of private banking client portfolios; "enabler" activities, staffing, and productivity by haven location; and private banking assets under management, considered below.
- **Proprietary Modeling.** Partly because of competitive behavior among official institutions, academics and members of the NGO communities, there has been a tendency to redo similar data analyses over and over again, without the kind of open, collaborative peer review that might be more conducive to generating cumulative progress on models and methods. There has also been a tendency to be somewhat vague about key estimation methods, data sources, and assumptions. Finally, there has no doubt been a great deal of redundant analysis of the very same data sets. This contrasts sharply with the more "open" approach to models, estimates and data in, say, environmental sciences.
- **Official Secrecy.** The key problem is missing data. Much of the data required for this kind of analysis appears to be either already on hand or readily available, should central banks, treasuries, and multilateral institutions like the BIS and the IMF decide to make it available -- or at least analyze it internally and aggregate it a form that is into acceptable for publication. A key action item is for NGOs -- not to mention developing countries -- to press such institutions for more transparency.

Process Improvements -- Estimation Research

A key objective of this project, beyond generating new estimates, is to establish a more explicit framework for making such estimates and a more open process for researchers to collaborate.

We have established a web site on "Estimating the Price of Offshore" where all the data sets and models employed in this paper will be made publicly available. This will permit researchers to develop variations of their own, avoid redundancy, and even more important, trade suggestions for improvements, and share new data sources. The web page is here: http://www.taxjustice.net/cms/front_content.php?idcat=148.

We also plan to establish facilities for researchers in this area to collaborate.

5. NEW ESTIMATES

Some background

Pending changes in research collaboration, we have tried to address all the other key flaws in existing estimates -- technical errors and omissions, the lack of explicit methodologies; variations in data sources, methods, and time periods that makes it difficult to compare alternative estimates; and excessive reliance on a limited range of data types and estimation methods.

Scope of the Estimates

At the outset it is worth restating our core focus, which is on measuring *long-term unrecorded cross-border private financial capital flows and stocks* that have contributed significantly to the erosion of the domestic tax base, especially in developing countries.

There are several very different sources for these flows and stocks -- that is one reason why I prefer to call them "unrecorded capital flows and stocks" rather than "capital flight."

One key source is underreported capital flows that have been secreted offshore and invested abroad beyond the reach of domestic tax authorities.

This broad definition focuses on unrecorded capital flows without pre-judging the motives for it.³⁵ Among the possible motives are (1) short-term speculation ("hot money"), (2) longer-term portfolio diversification, (3) asset protection (including protection against political risks and illegality), and (4) more dubious motives, like money laundering, income tax evasion, "round-tripping" (taking money offshore, dressing up in secrecy structures then pretending to be "foreign" investors in order to take advantage of tax breaks and exchange rates only available to "foreigners"); back-to-back lending games; export subsidy fraud; avoidance of import duties; corruption and more.

All these motives have been at work through the period we are considering, so the best explanation is "all of the above."

However, since net outflows from developing countries have continued over sustained periods of time, and since little offshore wealth or the earnings that it produces have been repatriated, the most important factors driving it are not those that drive "hot money," but long-term de-capitalization.

For the interested reader, Appendix II provides my critical review of existing "explanations" for "capital flight" in the economics literature.³⁶

As discussed below, our best estimate is that least 25-30 percent of these funds, averaging several hundred billion per year since the 1970s, have come from developing countries.

Another key source is under-taxed corporate profits and royalties that have been parked offshore in low-tax havens by way of rigged transfer pricing schemes. While estimates for the value of such transfer pricing abuses are more problematic, they are likely to be significant.³⁷

A third source is a myriad of illicit activities in the global underground economy -- corruption, fraud, insider trading, drug trafficking, "blood diamonds," and innumerable other for-profit crimes. Even for source countries with zero or very low income taxes, like Russia, Saudi Arabia, and most other Middle Eastern oil producers, havens provide a convenient way to launder all this illicit loot. While banks and other financial intermediaries are supposed to follow "know your customer" rules that prevent this kind of chicanery, in practice the regulations are full of loopholes -- rather like, appropriately enough, Swiss cheese.³⁸

Narrow scope, conservative estimates.

Despite including all these sources, our focus so far is still much narrower than the full scope of "the price of offshore." There is a long laundry list of economic bads enabled by haven jurisdictions: not only tax evasion but also fraud, bribery, illegal gambling, money laundering, and traffic in contraband: drugs, sweatshops, human and sex trafficking, arms, toxic waste, conflict diamonds, endangered species, bootlegged software...the list is virtually endless.

In principle, all these "bads" deserve to be included on the social balance sheet in any overall assessment of the offshore industry. In practice, however, we will focus here on what we can get a handily on. And given the sheer scale of tax evasion facilitated by offshore havens, however, it is clearly one of the main anchors for the system, which underpins all these other dubious activities.

We also omit several important types of non-financial wealth that are collectively quite sizeable, as well as important for tax justice and development policy -- notably human capital, net claims on real property (including land and natural resources), and "intangibles" like claims to patents, trademarks, brands, technical know-how, and other intellectual property. In all these cases the role of cross-border flows and "offshore" havens appears to have been increasing: for example, recent exposes concerning redomiciliations of intellectual property to low-tax jurisdictions by leading US pharmaceutical and computer companies, or continuing concerns about "Third World brain drain".

Do tax havens provide public goods, as well as "bads"?

Defenders of the status quo will argue that this paper only addresses "the price of offshore," not the value they say it provides. They would argue that havens, for example, help people dodge noxious government rules and regulations, provide escape hatches for the victims of oppressive regimes, help wealthy elites evade "confiscatory" taxation, diversify their domestic portfolios, enjoy the fruits of their hard labor undisturbed by the irritants of taxation and regulation, and at the same time compelling nation-states to engage in "tax competition," which (they argue) force them to become more efficient in delivering government services.

Such tradeoffs are not unknown. For example, it is very hard to defend "tax enforcement at any price" when the tax collector is the Burmese junta, Gaddafi's Libya, or perhaps even the City of Chicago.

Our sense, however, is that most countries operate very, very far from this hypothetical "tax compliance vs. freedom-and-prosperity margin," along which increased tax competition and reduced compliance automatically leads to increased liberty, entrepreneurship, and growth. We at the Tax Justice Network feel we have, in a variety of different flora, effectively demolished pretty much every one of their arguments for these supposed benefits.³⁹

The arguments of the defenders of tax havens are especially problematic once we consider the facts that the proceeds of non-compliance tend to flow not to the best and brightest, but to the most unsavory; that non-compliance is contagious, so aggressive non-compliance by elites promotes non-compliance by everyone else except the poor, who end up footing the bill; that most of the proceeds of capital flight and tax evasion are never repatriated to source countries but sit idle in relatively-low-yield offshore investments; and that when the public sector has been starved for capital (perhaps having had to rely on high-cost loans or inflationary finance rather than tax revenue), the rate of return on public investments is often higher than on private investment. Tax, by producing better roads and educated populations and so on, can "crowd in" private investment, rather than crowd it out as many people believe.

Estimation Methods and Some Results

As noted, to overcome the limitations of previous estimates, our strategy has been to triangulate on estimates from several different angles. As mentioned, our four key models are as follows:

- A standard version of the "sources-and-uses" model for country-by-country unrecorded capital flows.
- An "accumulated offshore wealth" model.
- An "offshore investor portfolio model," based on cross-border assets data.
- Direct estimates of offshore assets under management for the world's top 50 global private banks.

The paper supplements these with other evidence, including:

1. Data on so-called "transfer mispricing."
2. Data on the cross-border demand for liquid "mattress money" like reserve currency and gold, part of which may move through offshore markets
3. A review of market research by leading consulting firms on the size of the "offshore" private banking market.

Another reference point is Credit Suisse's global wealth estimate for mid-year 2011, which is probably the most comprehensive and most recent estimate of global wealth. It puts total global wealth at \$231 trillion, including financial assets and non-financial assets (principally housing and land) at market value.⁴⁰ Credit Suisse does not

offer a figure for offshore holdings but the ratio of this \$231 trillion figure to TJN's \$21-32 trillion figure headlined above is roughly 1:10, supporting our view that our new estimates are reasonable and conservative.

This section of the paper will review the estimation methods in some detail. The following section on "Flight Patterns" summarizes the results of the capital flows and wealth models.

The methods in detail.

(1) Unrecorded Capital Flows: "sources-and-uses."

This paper employs latest data from the World Bank/IMF, the UN, central banks and national accounts to explicitly model capital flows for each country, for 139 key "capital source" countries, mostly low-middle income countries, for which such time series data is published. As of 2010, these countries in our sample accounted for 85 percent of the world's 6.89 billion population, 51 percent of its \$76.7 trillion PPP-adjusted gross national income, \$4.1 trillion of foreign debt, and \$6.8 trillion of foreign reserves, or 75 percent of the world's total.

Data Sources. The specific variables included in the country models of unrecorded capital flows -- changes in foreign reserves, the current account balance, gross external debt stocks (of more than 1 year duration), net foreign investment (BOP basis), portfolio investment (net of covering transactions), nominal gross national income, price deflators -- are all annual data, initially in US dollars. (See the specific country spreadsheets).

In most cases these data are from the World Bank's World Development Indicators database. For a few countries, as noted on the spreadsheets, data for recent years had to be derived from other sources, including central banks and treasuries. Estimates of the currency composition of foreign debt, debt reschedulings, and changes in arrears are also generally from World Bank/ IMF sources, although in a few cases (e.g., Singapore) central bank data was used to supplement these estimates.

Time Periods. As shown in each country spreadsheet, in most cases individual country data are analyzed for the entire period 1970-2010 inclusive, although the available time series are shorter for a subset of countries, notably the FSU states, China, and some sub-Saharan countries.

Country Flows Model Details. The basic country flows model provides estimates of nominal and real offshore capital flows for the period from 1970 to 2010 inclusive, correcting them for factors.

Several alternative measures of unrecorded capital flows flight are available in the academic literature on this subject. These are voluminous, compared with the number of empirical studies.⁴¹

Our own preferred measure is an adjusted version of the so-called "sources and uses" method.⁴² Basically this adds up a country's measured sources of foreign capital -- foreign loans, net direct investment, and net portfolio investments -- and compares them with recorded uses, including financing current account deficits and increasing official reserves. A simple Russian example is provided in Appendix III.⁴³

In principle, the difference between these recorded "sources of foreign capital" and "uses of foreign capital" may be attributed to unrecorded net capital outflows. Of course each and every ingredient in this yardstick is subject to measurement error. However, over time and across dozens of countries, the errors should more or less cancel out.

We have preferred to develop our own estimates of capital flight to have consistent estimates and a standard period for comparison.. On the "sources" side, our measure starts with World Bank data for dollar value of gross external debt stocks by year, as well as net foreign direct investment (on a balance-of-payments basis) and net foreign portfolio investment, excluding covering transactions by foreign Central Banks. The World Bank's annual debt stock estimates already include an estimate of foreign portfolio debt investments and trade debt.

Exceptional Financing. One necessary adjustment to the World Bank debt stock numbers is for exceptional financing, an accounting entry made when countries have trouble servicing their debts -- the sum of net interest rate arrears, debt forgiveness, and capitalized interest. As noted by Kaufmann (2004), this entry is "fictional finance," in the sense that it amounts to an arbitrary book-keeping entry, not actual cash flow. The World Bank's

debt series includes exceptional financing in its debt series, but not in reserves, while the IMF includes it in its measure of "reserves and related items." For troubled debtors like Brazil, Argentina, Nigeria, and Russia, the numbers are large enough to lead to nonsensical results if exceptional financing is included. We deducted it from the World Bank debt stock series.

Debt Flows Vs. Changes in Debt Stocks. The World Bank also provides a series of "debt flows" by year for some countries, for 1989 on, but there are large unexplained discrepancies in this data, compared with "first-differencing" our adjusted debt stock numbers, and it gives implausible results in the case of several countries, so we decided to rely on the adjusted debt stock numbers.

Exchange Rate Adjustments. What is "foreign debt," anyway? The World Bank defines it with respect to the residency of the borrower, not the currency in which it is denominated, so it is important to keep an eye on currency variations in distinguishing "real" from "nominal" capital flows.

Some researchers on capital flows (Boyce and Ndikumana *op.cit.*) adopted the practice of adjust the World Bank's long-term debt stock numbers for changes in exchange rates, in cases where there is a substantial amount of non-dollar-denominated long-term debt. If, say, the dollar appreciates relative to the yen, the actual dollar value of yen-denominated long-term debt and the flows of new principal associated with it would increase, while the Bank's dollar-denominated series would be unchanged.

I have grudgingly followed this practice here though it is laborious, given the number of countries and currencies involved, and though it turns out not to make all that much difference to the estimates. Indeed, this result is consistent with the evidence from Boyce' and Epstein (*op. cit.*) own study, which shows that the effects of exchange rate adjustment to debt on capital flow estimates are small for most countries, mainly because movements in multiple currencies often cancel each other out, especially over long periods of time. In addition, most large debtors now hedge against currency fluctuations. Nevertheless, for the sake of academic purity, we've done the theoretically correct thing.

Debt Reschedulings and Changes in Arrears. Depending on the country, these can be very important, although most estimates to date have largely ignored them. From a balance of payments accounting standpoint, for example, declining arrears are like increased reserves or a rising current account deficit -- a "use" of foreign funds. We have incorporated them in estimates for all 139 countries.

(2) The Accumulated Offshore Wealth Model

Building on the country models developed to estimate capital flows, our second key model uses a simple framework to estimate how much these accumulated flows might be worth over time.

This addresses the obvious problem with "flow-based" estimates -- they don't help us account for the rise of the global offshore industry and its assets under management over time. Nor do they acknowledge the reality that -- thanks to the private banking industry's sustained lobbying -- offshore investors typically are permitted to enjoy the tax-free perks of "non-domiciliation" or non-residency in countries like the U.S. and the U.K., at least with respect to interest on debt and bank deposits.

The "base case" version of this model assumes that a significant portion -- 50 to 75 percent, on average -- of these tax-free earnings are not repatriated to source countries, but are reinvested abroad in relatively "safe," low-yielding investments, denominated in traditional reserve currencies like U.S. dollars. This is consistent with the fact that most haven investments are made for longer-term motives like asset protection, money laundering, and diversification, not just short-term speculation, with low turnover and high reinvestment rates.

We further assume that 100 percent of the initial outflows are net of source-country income taxes -- otherwise they presumably would not be "unrecorded." Subsequent offshore earnings are not repatriated and are not subject either to domestic tax or foreign taxes.

Reflecting their appetite for secure low-risk investments, we assume offshore clients earn a modest 6-month CD rate on their accumulated foreign capital, which their private bankers have already “grossed down” to reflect the costs of offshore management.

This basically assumes, conservatively, that over the long haul, a large share of flight flows has been invested in relatively-secure portfolios of US and Euro-denominated assets, mainly bank CDs. Until the late 2000s, the conventional wisdom among flight capitalists was, “What could be safer than ‘too-big-to-fail’ US, Swiss and UK banks?” Of course there was also investing in Park Avenue, Mayfair, Geneva, and South Beach real estate, high-flying hedge funds, Internet startups, Panama ocean front, film productions, rap musicians and drug deals. But our assumption permits us to establish a conservative baseline for portfolio returns. As one Citibanker in Mexico City said, “The money my clients put offshore is for safe-keeping...When they want 200 percent returns, they keep the money here.”⁴⁴

Obviously there is much more work to do with exact modeling for specific groups of investors, time periods, and rates of return. For example, appetites for risk and liquidity may vary considerably by region, while the low -- if stable -- nominal rates of returns on offshore investments assumed here may have been wildly high or low in different periods.

On the other hand, based on our interviews with private bankers and other offshore industry experts, for the median offshore private banking customer, these assumptions are not a bad start. Based on our interviews with private bankers and other offshore industry watchers to date, this kind of “ideal Swiss customer” is much less interested in maximizing short-term returns than in securing an offshore nest egg -- typically he or she is often taking quite enough risk, thank you, back home. But of course these assumptions are easily modified, assuming we have evidentiary reasons to do so.

China’s Story. There is one counter-example, or at least a potential qualification to this offshore wealth accumulation model, however. This is the case of China. As noted below in our review of the results, China, including the mainland and the Hong Kong SAR, have recently been at the top of the list in terms of both unrecorded capital outflows and estimated “flight wealth.” As of 2010, for example, China had accumulated real outflows (in \$2000) of \$743 billion, the highest in East Asia, while the Hong Kong SAR recorded outflows of \$125.9 billion. If we simply combine these flows and apply the wealth accumulation model to them, the result is that Chinese investors supposedly now account for nearly \$1.2 trillion of offshore private wealth -- an implausible 13 percent of the global total.⁴⁵

The real problem here is that, just as in the case of China’s spurious trade misinvoicing noted above, much of its unrecorded capital transactions with Hong Kong are probably double-counted. A significant amount of China’s apparent capital flight is actually just “round-tripping” by way of intermediary companies based in Hong Kong and a few other key havens, notably the British Virgin Islands.)

This still counts as part of the “offshore industry,” but for purposes of our wealth model, it begs the question of how large a factor such round-tripping is not only for China, but for other source countries, especially for those on our “top 20 offshore wealth list.”

However, we’d argue that China’s situation with Hong Kong may be unique. While, for example, key Latin American countries like Venezuela and Mexico have long enjoyed close ties with their closest haven, the US, and we are aware of some “round-tripping” by investors in Brazil, we also know for a fact that wealthy investors from these source countries account for a significant share of US bank deposits owned by non-residents.

Finally, we can use our estimates of Hong Kong’s unrecorded capital to place an upper bound on the maximum amount of round-tripping with respect to the mainland – at most, it is about 17 percent of mainland China’s gross unrecorded capital outflows. This permits us to adjust China’s accumulated wealth estimates accordingly. It also provides a reasonable “maximum estimate” for the likely share of round-tripping by other source countries.

(3) Analysis of Private Banking Assets

As we've seen, the accumulated offshore wealth model opened the door to many other possibilities, including an analysis of reinvestment earnings on offshore wealth.

For decades, First World private bankers employed by the top 50 or so institutions have orchestrated the systematic erosion of income and wealth tax bases in high- and low-income countries alike. They have assiduously recruited the world's wealthiest people as their clients, including tens of thousands of developing countries. They have served as senior pilots in "Capital Flight Air," helping these clients move a significant share – more than half, in the case of Latin America and some Asian countries -- of their liquid capital to offshore accounts under the cover of shell companies and trusts, beyond the reach of domestic tax authorities. They have enabled clients to move it, hide it, invest it, manage it, spend it, and make use of it remotely on the fly.

All told, the sophisticated "tax injustice" network that these institutions have constructed now employs fewer than a million people all over the planet.⁴⁶ But this is an influential million -- they are the systems architects, operators, and managers of the "**plutonomic system**" that Citigroup analysts described quite in an infamous, now suppressed, 2005 memo.⁴⁷

While there are now over 500 private banks, hedge funds, law firms, accounting firms, and insurance companies that specialize in offshore, the industry is actually very concentrated. Most of its employees work directly or indirectly for the world's top 50 private banks, especially the top 21 that now each have private cross-border "assets under management" of at least \$100 billion each.⁴⁸

In short, this comparative handful of major private banking institutions now accounts for 62 to 74 percent of all offshore private wealth. Many readers will recognize the names of the dominant players, as they have done for decades: UBS, Credit Suisse, Citigroup/SSB/Morgan Stanley, Deutsche Bank, BankAmerica/Merrill Lynch, JPMorganChase, BNP Paribas, HSBC, Pictet & Cie, Goldman Sachs, ABN Amro, Barclays, Credit Agricole, Julius Baer, Societe General, and Lombard Odier.

To address this basic fact about the offshore market, we have undertaken a systematic analysis of cross-border private banking assets under management at the top 50 international private banks for the period 2005-2010. Our data sources include company annual reports and 10Ks, investment analysts, interviews with private banking industry experts, industry watchers like Wealth Briefing News and Money Laundering Alert, and a survey of recent market research studies for the private banking industry.

The results are readily summarized.

First, as of December 2010, by our estimates, the world's top 50 global private banks alone had \$12.06 trillion of private cross-border financial wealth under management. This compared with 2005, when our estimate is that the top 50 managed \$5.4 trillion -- an average annual growth rate for the industry of nearly 16 percent, despite the world economy's ups and downs.

Nor are these all the client assets that these institutions handle. There are also bank deposits, which are usually included under managed assets, as well as "assets under custody and administration," including brokerage assets. Depending on the year, these additional assets typically add at least 25 percent to the total. Allowing for this, as well as for underreporting and other data problems, these figures are consistent with our overall \$21 trillion to \$32 estimate for global offshore financial assets as of 2010.

Second, the top ten banks in this group are remarkably stable -- the Swiss banks UBS and Credit Suisse occupied the lead positions in both years, and 7 of the top 10 remained in the top tier. Notable new additions to the leaders were Barclays, the ultra-private Geneva bank Pictet, and BankAmerica, by way of its Merrill acquisition; notable decliners were Citigroup and ABN Amro.

Third, the top ten banks grew even faster than the industry as a whole, an AAGR of over 20 percent per year during this period, sharply increasing their share of the group's assets under management from 42 percent in 2005 to more than 51 percent in 2010. The irony here is that every one of these leading global banks, except Pictet, were deemed "too big to fail" by their governments in 2008-2010, and collectively received hundreds of billions in taxpayer-financed capital injections, standby credits, loan guarantees, toxic

asset guarantees, low-cost loans, and the U.S. Treasury's February 2009 swap deal with Switzerland.⁴⁹ They benefitted greatly from the \$80 billion AIG bailout and the virtually-zero real interest rate environment established by the world's central banks. Without these "too big to fail" government subsidies, several would have disappeared.⁵⁰

Did the Treasury Departments around the world not understand that these very same banks are leading the world in enabling tax dodging -- indeed, to some extent, precisely because offshore investors know that they have been under-written by their Treasury Departments?

(4) The Offshore Investor Portfolio Model

Our last model is another relatively simple, data-focused model of offshore investor portfolio behavior. It is based on a combination of BIS data on cross-border deposits and other asset holdings by "non-bank" investors, an analysis of portfolio mix assumptions made by wealth industry analysts, and interviews with actual private banks.

All this yields a range of "portfolio scale-up" factors that can be combined with reported BIS assets data to yield another estimate for the size of offshore wealth.

Roots of the model: TJN's Fruitful Errors. Our model is rooted in TJN's original 2005 estimate for offshore private wealth of \$11.5 trillion, which included \$2 trillion of non-residential offshore real estate and \$9.5 trillion of offshore financial wealth. Until now, this is still not only the largest estimate to date, but also the only one that was made with even a rudimentary portfolio model.

TJN based its rough estimate on the simple procedure of scaling up BIS data on offshore deposits by "nonbanks" by an average ratio of "cash and bank deposits" to all financial assets that was based on ML/CapGemini's annual estimates of asset allocations for high-net worth portfolios.

Unfortunately, TJN made several simple errors. These contributed, if anything, to a substantial underestimation of the size of offshore. However, the basic methodology can be refined and extended to deliver yet another triangulation.

TJN's 2005 estimate contained several errors, all of which biased it downwards. First, it relied on the wrong line item for offshore deposits, using a total of U.S. \$2.7 trillion.⁵¹ The correct comparable figure for offshore deposit liabilities by nonbanks for June 2005 was \$4.68 trillion. By June 2007 this had grown to \$7.43 trillion, dropping back to \$7.01 trillion as of June 2010, under the impact of the economic crisis.⁵²

Second, to estimate total offshore financial assets, TJN used a 3.5 "liquidity ratio" to scale up this cross-border deposits figure to total financial assets. This was based on a 2004 study of global financial asset demand by McKinsey & Co., which found that that the ratio of "cash" (bank deposits) to total financial net worth in high-net worth investor portfolios had averaged 3.3 to 3.85 over the preceding 4 years.

TJN therefore assumed a 3.5 ratio to scale up its deposits estimate to financial net worth. This was despite the fact that it was hard to reconcile McKinsey's estimates for deposits with those of BIS, since the McKinsey numbers inappropriately included a huge amount of inter-bank deposits, whose ratios to financial assets had nothing to do with the behavior of nonbanks.

In fact, ML/ CapGemini (ML/CG) has estimated actual liquidity ratios for high-net worth individuals with more than \$1 million in net financial assets directly for June 1998, December 1998, June 2002, and each successive year through 2010. The median value for 1998-2010 was 4.6, and for 2004-2005 it topped 4.9. (See ML/CG, World Wealth Reports, *op. cit.*) Only in years of declining stock markets like 2002 and 2008-9 did the liquidity ratio dip below 4. For purposes of our estimates here, 2010 was basically a year when all the key stock markets in the US, Asia, and Europe were recovering nicely, signaling (prematurely) a recovery.

There *might* be a case that ML/CG's estimates of these "average" liquidity ratios for HNWI's should be taken as an upper bound for offshore financial investments, on the argument that offshore funds are "security blankets" for more risk-averse investors. We've doubled-checked this by examining the size of private banking client's "invested

assets" under management relative to their cross-border deposits for several private banks that are leaders in the offshore market, and publish this data, including UBS and Credit Suisse. For these institutions, "liquidity ratios" equaled or exceeded the same- year liquidity ratios implied by ML/CG's average HNWI portfolio allocations.

In our estimates, we have treated the ML/CG-based liquidity ratios as upper bounds, and have set a conservative lower bound at 3.0 ratio, much lower than the 3.5 originally used by TJN. This 3.0 ratio is below the ML/CG portfolio allocation estimates for all but one year in the 1998-2010 period -- 2002, when it equaled 3.0. It therefore establishes a super-conservative floor under our non-banks deposits multiplier.

Of less interest to our focus here -- which is on financial wealth -- while TJN also allowed that non-residential real estate holdings might be another important component of offshore wealth, their \$2 trillion estimate for 2005 seems low relative to the corrected portfolio size.

Finally, TJN also ignored the role of so-called "alternative investments" and "collectibles" in HNWI portfolios, including hedge funds, art, and private equity. While we lack specific information on the share of *offshore* portfolios *per se* accounted for by such illiquid investments, for real estate and non-collectible alternatives, the respective median portfolio shares reported by ML/CG for the period 1998-2008 were 17 percent and 10 percent respectively, with ranges of 15%-24% and 7%-20%.

In sum, while further research on offshore HNWI portfolio allocations is warranted, the basic TJN methodology is worth developing. For purposes of this paper we have checked the range of liquidity ratios used above with private bankers and industry sources, and they have confirmed that they are plausible.

Revised Portfolio Model Estimates. As for TJN's original estimates, when the errors are corrected, the most likely quantity of private offshore financial assets in June 2004 was not \$9.5 trillion, but \$12.1 to \$20 trillion, depending on whether we use the very conservative 3.0 liquidity multiplier or something more realistic.

Since then, offshore deposits by nonbanks nearly doubled from 2004 to December 2007, when the global economy took a tumble. During that period, offshore financial assets may have grown to be worth as much as \$22 to 33 trillion. Since then the model indicates that they have slumped slightly to the \$21 trillion to \$32 trillion range, with a plausible midpoint of about \$26 trillion. But this still represents enough growth since 2004 to be consistent with the growth in global private banking AUMs noted above.⁵³ Assuming a developing country wealth share of 25 to 30 percent, this range is also consistent with the results of our accumulated wealth model.

The Revised Global Distribution of Wealth

It may be helpful to place these estimates in the context of the overall distribution of global financial wealth. It turns out that this distribution is incredibly concentrated. By our estimates, at least a third of all private financial wealth, and nearly half of all offshore wealth, is now owned by world's richest 91,000 people -- just 0.001% of the world's population. The next 51 percent of all wealth is owned by the next 8.4 million, another trivial 0.14% of the world's population.⁵⁴ As noted, a third of this has been accumulated from the 139 source countries in our focus sample. Almost all of it has managed to avoid all income and estate taxes, either by the countries where it has been invested and or where it comes from.

6. TRADE MISINVOICING -- AN IMPORTANT ASIDE

On the "uses" side, as noted, we have employed the World Bank's series for country current account deficits and changes in reserves. Some authors, like GFI, Epstein (2005), and Boyce and Ndikumana have also tried to adjust the observed current account deficit for alleged "trade misinvoicing" of foreign trade.

I have experimented extensively with such adjustments. I simply don't find the rough rules of thumb that are used to make these adjustments reliable.⁵⁵

If one is a great believer in the importance of aggregate -- as opposed to case-specific -- goods trade mispricing, leaving out this adjustment generally tends to make our unrecorded capital flow estimates even more conservative.

This is as good a point as any to make a more general point about the estimation of transfer mispricing, since it has recently received more attention than ever in the "offshore" debate.

In the course of preparing this paper and another presentation for TJN's recent Helsinki transfer pricing conference,⁵⁶ I have closely examined several recent estimates of alleged transfer mispricing in goods -- by GFI in particular.

This analysis leads me to conclude that we cannot rely on the standard approaches to estimating transfer mispricing abuse in order to correct errors in the current account, much less in order to estimate aggregate flows of unrecorded capital flows due to transfer mispricing. There are simply too many problems with the data.

In particular, we have GFI's well known claims that at least "\$1 trillion per year" is being lost each year by developing countries because of goods mispricing. I find this sensational claim dubious at best. A close look at GFI's analysis of trade mispricing reveals that it is seriously flawed, for several reasons.⁵⁷

1. GFI's analysis leaves out all country cases where their measures of trade mispricing are negative -- despite the fact that such cases are quite common, especially in Africa, due to factors like unreported contraband and the parking of profits in offshore havens. This factor tends to inflate the aggregate estimates enormously.
2. More than 70 percent of GFI's aggregate estimates for trade misinvoicing derive from just two countries - - China and Mexico. Both of these gaps also largely pertain to these countries' trade with the US. What's going on here?

Recent work on these two sizable imbalances by professional trade experts suggests that they were largely due to bureaucratic factors like timing delays in trade reports, exchange rate variations, the handling of transshipments through Hong Kong, China's key "offshore" trade intermediary, and the fact that Mexico does not track or adjust its data for re-exports. Without a more careful look at specific bilateral trade relationships at the level of trading partners and industries, we should treat these estimates with great caution.⁵⁸

The Need for Case Studies. On the other hand, my recent work on goods misinvoicing shows that it can be a serious problem in specific industries like mining, forestry, tobacco, beer, and agribusiness, -- especially where it provides a conduit for capital outflows, parking profits in low-tax havens, and tax avoidance.

Using previously-unanalyzed trading partner data from the UN Comtrade data base, we have done country-by-country trade mispricing analyses for key "source countries," including China, Mexico, India, and Zambia, a tiny "rich poor" country in sub-Saharan Africa that heavily on copper exports.⁵⁹

We have also looked closely at transfer mispricing by Switzerland, a key "re-exporting haven" in the global trade system that has heretofore earned a nice living by parking profits havens. These careful case studies of particular bilateral trading relationships actually underscore the unsavory role that havens play in our global trading system.

Our analysis leads to several key conclusions:

1. We simply *cannot* rely on transfer mispricing comparisons to correct errors in the current account, for purposes of estimating **aggregate** unrecorded capital flows. The gargantuan estimates of trade mispricing that we often read about in the headlines should be taken with a salt thumb and a shot glass of tequila.
2. Specific industry case studies are the way to go. Our detailed studies of mispricing with respect to Mexico, Zambia, India, and Switzerland show that analyzing bilateral trade closely underscores the unsavory role that havens play in our global trading system.
3. Given the serious data problems -- for example, the absence of up-to-date published CIF-FOB ratios for specific trading partners and commodities -- there is no way right now to estimate how large it is on a global scale, without a great deal of further research.

Furthermore, the focus on goods transfer mispricing obscures the significant role played by corporate abuses of the haven system with respect to “intangibles” like brands, patents, and knowhow, mispricing of which has been growing dramatically. Finally, noisy estimates of aggregate corporate goods mispricing tend to distract attention not only from the kind of haven abuse of mis-invoicing just noted, but also from the serious abuses by the offshore investment and private banking industries that are the focus of this paper.

7. IMPLICATIONS

This report has many implications for public policy and research. This final section summarizes some of the most important ones.

I. Missing Wealth, Understated Inequality

As noted earlier, this report focuses our attention on a huge “black hole” in the world economy that has never before been measured -- private offshore wealth, and the vast amounts of untaxed income that it produces. Coming at a time when governments around the world are starved for resources, and we are more conscious than ever of the costs of inequality, it could not be more timely.

Using several independent estimation methods, and the most comprehensive data set ever assembled, we have been able to triangulate on the size and growth of this black hole. Even though we taken pains to err on the conservative side, one key implication is that this hidden offshore sector is large enough to make a significant difference to most of our conventional measures of inequality.

The report underscores the fact that all of our conventional measures of inequality sharply understate the levels of income and wealth inequality at both the country and global level. (The Tax Justice Network report *Inequality: You Don't Know the Half of It*, which accompanied the 2012 release of this one, explores the issue in more depth.) For most countries, the inequality of financial wealth within countries is not only much greater than we suspected at any one point in time, but it has been growing much faster.

Indeed, since the overwhelming share of unrecorded offshore private assets that we have identified belong to a tiny elite, the impact on inequality is astonishing. We have estimated, for example, that less than 100,000 people, .001% of the world's population, now control over 30 percent of the world's financial wealth.⁶⁰

Furthermore, since the offshore industry experienced a take-off in the late 1960s, and has been growing relative to the rest of the world economy through 2010, it appears that in-country wealth inequality may have increased rapidly during this period.

Of course “global inequality” is also the result of disparities among average levels of wealth among nations. The acceleration of national growth by leading developing countries like China, India, and Brazil since the late 1980s implies that the narrowing of average differentials in national income and wealth levels among countries may have offset these wider in-country inequalities to some extent.

On the other hand, the accelerated growth rates of “these fortunate few” developing countries has also widened the gap between them and many other developing countries.

Furthermore, “local,” in-country inequality is arguably by far the most important type of inequality in terms of social, political, and economic impacts, as well as perceptions of relative well being, and that is the type that has increased at the hands of the global haven industry.

Finally, from the “pirate bankers’ market” perspective, what is perhaps most interesting about the new landscape of global inequality that we have uncovered is the recent emergence of a true transnational private elite -- a relatively tiny fraction of the world's population that shares surprisingly similar needs and interests from the standpoint of financial secrecy, banking services, taxes, and regulation.

Increasingly, indeed, the individual members of this private elite may be assuming many of the same attributes as multinational companies, even as MNCs have been becoming more like private individuals, so far as political rights are concerned. This means that super-rich individuals are increasingly acting as citizens of multiple jurisdictions at once, even though they may be resident “nowhere” for tax purposes; that they are able to relocate quickly across borders; and that they are able to acquire “representation without taxation,” the ability to exert local political influence in multiple jurisdictions, independent of whatever taxes they pay in any particular jurisdiction.

It also means that as a group this transnational elite has, in principle, a strong vested interest in pushing for weaker income and wealth taxation weaker government regulation, more “open” markets, and weaker restrictions on political influence and campaign spending across borders -- with a huge “transnational haven army” of pirate bankers, law firms, accounting firms, lobbyists, and PR firms ready to do their bidding.

Thus the *objective* increase in global wealth inequality at the individual level that we have begun to measure here sets the stage for asking a wide variety of questions about the resulting political and social impacts on the traditional nation-state.

II. Tax Base Erosion.

Another key implication of this study is that the impact on lost tax revenue implied by our estimates may be huge -- large enough to make a significant difference to the finances of nations, especially to developing countries that are now struggling to replace lost aid dollars and pay for climate change.

Assuming, conservatively, that global offshore financial wealth of \$21 trillion earns a total return of just 3 percent a year, and would have faced an average marginal tax rate of 30 percent in the home country, this unrecorded wealth might have generated tax revenues of \$189 billion per year -- more than twice the \$86 billion that OECD countries as a whole are now spending on all overseas development assistance.

Of course calculations are subject to all kinds of caveats -- the most important being that they imagine a world in which developing and developed countries alike are not only to locate this offshore wealth and tax it, but are also able to agree on reasonable rules for divvying up the proceeds. In practice, of course, many key “source” countries don’t even have domestic income tax regimes in place, let alone the power to enforce such taxes across borders.

But from this angle, this study actually contains some good news. First, in effect, we have actually just located a huge pile -- at least \$21 trillion -- of untapped financial wealth that might now be called upon to contribute to the solution of our most pressing global problems.

Second, we also now know that a substantial fraction of this wealth is being managed by the top 50 players in the global private banking industry.

Together, these findings may provide an opportunity to think creatively about (1) how to prevent the abuses that have led to off-the-books wealth accumulation in the future -- for example, through automatic information exchange, country-by-country reporting, and beneficial ownership registration; and (2) how best to make use of the huge stock of accumulated, untaxed wealth that is already there, as well as the steady stream of untaxed earnings that it generates -- for example, by levying a modest OECD-wide withholding tax on “anonymous assets under management” in the top 50 banks, with the proceeds devoted to aid and climate change.

Again, such policy measures are especially important for the majority of developing countries that are not in a position to be able to tax income or wealth on their own. Indeed, once we take into account the growth of hidden offshore assets and the earnings they produce into account, many erstwhile “debtor countries” are in fact revealed to be net creditors of the wealthy OECD countries where much of this private financial wealth has been parked, off the books.

Indeed, as noted, this report has shown that developing world as a whole has been a significant CREDITOR of the developed world for more than a decade.

For developing countries, then, the true so-called “development finance” problem is precisely that all this unrecorded wealth is now offshore, in the hands of private bankers and their own rapacious elites. That means their

"debt" problem has really become a **tax justice** problem -- one that the developed countries have a responsibility as well as the capacity to help them solve.

III. Pirate Banking on the Rampage

As discussed above, it turns out that the secretive offshore sector -- which essentially specializes in tax dodging and the laundering of proceeds from a myriad of other dubious activities -- is not just an archipelago of exotic unrelated havens, but a very lucrative global industry -- the "global pirate banking" industry. This industry has basically been designed and operated for decades, not by shady no-name banks located in island paradises, but by the *world's largest private banks*, as well as leading law firms and accounting firms. All of these institutions are based, not in island paradises, but in major First World capitals like New York, London, Geneva, Frankfurt, and Singapore.

As we've seen, this report suggests that the world's largest banks have, if anything, been expanding their haven-related "pirate banking" operations significantly. even while official institutions like the G20, the BIS, the IMF, and the World Bank have basically turned a blind eye to it.

Indeed, the report reminds us that that many of the very same banks that were most deeply involved in parking trillions offshore have recently received huge public bailouts.

Thus, of the top 10 players in global private banking- **all ten** received substantial injections of government loans and capital during the 2008-2012 period. In effect, ordinary taxpayers have been subsidizing the world's largest banks to keep them afloat, even as they help their wealthiest clients slash taxes.

Many of these market leaders in global pirate banking -- the practice of hiding and managing offshore assets for the world's elite -- have also been identified lately as the market leaders in many other forms of dubious activity, from the irresponsible mortgage lending and high-risk securitization that produced the 2008 financial crisis, to the very latest outrageous scandals involving Libor rate rigging and money laundering for the Mexican cartel.

All this begs the question of why it is that financial regulators continue all this dubious activity to be perpetrated by this very same comparative handful of giant institutions -- the living embodiment of corporate serial offenders, producing a seemingly endless stream of financial chicanery on a global scale, in country after country after country. Is there now such a thing as "Too Big To Be Honest?"

IV. Stemming the Tide

This leads naturally to the next implication -- nation-states need to work together to take steps now to control over all this out-of-control global "financial pollution."

In a sense, this presents exactly the same political question as the "tax justice" and "global elite" problems that were noted earlier. But the resulting financial misbehavior is no longer just a tax justice issue -- it is a fundamental problem of corporate malpractice that goes to the very heart of the global market economy, and the key players in the offshore industry are at the heart of it.

How should global bank regulators, as well as tax authorities, work together to clean up all this chicanery? The findings of this TJN report calls into question the claims made by G20 leaders way back in April 2009, in the immediate aftermath of the financial crisis, when they boldly declared that "the era of bank secrecy is over."

This reports underscores the fact that the "era of bank secrecy" and the misbehavior it protects is far from over -- that there is an urgent need for policy makers to take fundamental steps to stem the growth of the global haven industry.

As noted, among the key policy measures that TJN supports are automatic information exchange among tax authorities, county-by-country corporate reporting, and the deployment of public registries for beneficial ownership of companies, trusts, and foundations.

Given the lead role played by leading banks, law firms, and accounting firms in "enabling" all this dubious activity, global authorities must simply adopt much stiffer sanctions for the "repeat offenders" in this industry. Even large scale fines have not been effective deterrents -- we need to adopt much stronger sanctions for the institutions that engage in "pirate banking" misbehavior and the managers that run them.

Beyond that, this report also suggests that the line between "offshore" and "onshore" tax dodging has recently been blurred by the rise of First World secrecy jurisdictions like Delaware, Nevada, and Singapore, in addition to traditional "blacklist nominees" like Switzerland, Mauritius, Liechtenstein, and the Bahamas. In order to curtail the kind of "global bads" detailed in this report,, it will be vital to curb this "onshoring" of offshore secrecy.

V. Multilateral Regulators -- Missing Research, Data, and Will Power

As noted, despite this well-documented explosion in the size and growth of offshore private wealth, it is simply a scandal that official institutions like the Bank for International Settlements, the IMF, the World Bank, the OECD, and the G20, as well as leading central banks, have devoted so little research to this financial "black hole" in the global economy.

In principle, institutions like the World Bank, the IMF, the US Federal Reserve, the Bank of England, and the Bank for International Settlements not only have ample analytic resources, including scores of economists. They also have much of the data needed to estimate this sector more carefully.

For reasons of their own, however, they have tolerated the growth of the offshore sector far too long. It has been left up to NGOS like TJN to support the kind of detailed, painstaking factual analysis that underlies this report.

It is time for these institutions to live up to their promises, and work with organizations like TJN on a research and policy agenda that finally gives this offshore sector the attention it deserves.

Going forward, a key next step will be simply be to demand more transparency from global public institutions on this subject. They need to release more of the data they already have on its size and growth, and they need to devote more serious resources to its study.

VI. Summary.

It is common for researchers to conclude each and other every study with a call for more studies! Indeed, we have done that here, partly just because we are excited about the progress reported here, and partly just because we have uncovered so many more interesting puzzles.

However, by calling for more careful analysis and study, we don't wish to distract attention from the many important findings that, we believe, are already secure enough to justify acting upon them.

For example, we already know that the "black hole" represented by offshore financial wealth is much larger than anyone has previously determined.

We already know that it has grown large enough to have a powerful impact on inequality, the distribution of the tax burden, public finances, and political influence across the globe.

We already know that this sector has been designed, operated, and politically defended by an influential, well-organized global "pirate banking" industry.

¹We will house this and accompanying reports permanently here:
http://www.taxjustice.net/cms/front_content.php?idcat=148.

²More precisely, source countries" are those whose total real accumulated net unrecorded private capital outflows are positive for the period 1970 -- 2010 (or whatever period is available for the particular country.) Equivalently, it

is those countries whose private citizens have accumulated positive net unreported / untaxed financial wealth abroad.

³This is a rather homogenous group, the large majority of which are low-middle income countries, but include some "rich non-OECD" countries like Saudi Arabia and Kuwait, as well as a few 'developed' countries like Hungary and Korea. Our criterion was that a) external debt data was available, and b) they are 'source' countries: that is, those countries whose private citizens have accumulated positive net unreported/ untaxed financial wealth abroad.

⁴World Bank/IMF data (2012), my analysis.

⁵See James Henry, *The Blood Bankers, Tales from the Global Underground Economy*, October 2003, for an investigative inside look at the intestines of the global private banking model in developing countries.

⁶See Appendix III

⁷See, for example, by this author: "Noncompliance with US Tax Law," 15-111, in *Income Tax Compliance. A Report of the ABA Section of Taxation.*(Reston, Virginia: ABA, 1983); "The Debt Hoax," *The New Republic*, April 1986; "America the Tax Haven," *The Washington Post*, January 29, 1989; *Banqueros y Lavadolares.* (425 pp, Bogota: Tercer Mundo Editores, 1996); James S. Henry, *The Blood Bankers.* (2005: Basic Books, 2005); "The Myth of Debt Relief," in Steve Hiatt, ed., *A Game as Old as Empire.* (SF: Barrett Koehler, 2007); *Pirate Bankers* (2012, forthcoming). See also John Christensen, "Dirty Money: Inside the Secret World of Offshore Bank," 41-67, in Steve Hiatt, ed., *A Game as Old as Empire.* (SF: Barrett Koehler, 2007); Nicholas Shaxson, *Treasure Islands.* (UK: Palgrave MacMillan, 2011), and James Boyce and Leonce Ndikumana (2012).

⁸See Appendix I to this paper: "The Pre-History of Offshore Estimates."

⁹To attract foreign capital, most First World countries maintain elaborate income and estate tax preferences for so-called "non-resident aliens," and also for "non-domiciled" foreigners in the case of the U.K. and Switzerland, who are allowed to reside while paying very low income and wealth taxes.

¹⁰The Bank for International Settlement's quarterly and annual reports do contain detail on bank loans and other bank assets by country of destination, but not bank liabilities or client assets under management. See BIS, "International Banking Statistics", Quarterly reports, at <http://www.bis.org/statistics/rppb0910.htm>.

¹¹For example, see Appendix III, for the holes in the BIS data.

¹²See, for example, Gerald Epstein (2005) Editor, *Capital Flight and Capital Controls in Developing Countries.* (Amherst: Edward Elgar, 2005), the most comprehensive estimates until this book. See also James Boyce and Leonce Ndikumana (2001) "Is Africa a Net Debtor. New Estimates of Capital Flight From Several Severely-Indebted Sub-Saharan African Countries, 1970-98," *Journal of Development Studies*, Vol. 38, No. 2, pp. 27-56; Florian Kaufmann (2004) "A Critical Discussion of How to Measure Capital Flight: The Case of Argentina," New School/UMass Graduate Workshop, November 2004; Kevin Chang, Stijn Claessens, and Robert Cumby (1997) "Conceptual and Methodological Issues in the Measurement of Capital Flight," *International Journal of Financial Economics*, Vol. 2(1997), 101-111; Benu Schneider (2003a), "Measuring Capital Flight: Estimates and Interpretations," ODI Working Paper 194, Overseas Development Institute; Edsel Beja Jr. (2004), "Capital Flight from the ASEAN Four: A Case Study on Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, and Thailand," U Mass Amherst.

¹³See Mohsin S. Khan and Nadeem Ul Haque, *Foreign Borrowing and Capital Flight: A Formal Analysis*, IMF Staff Papers, V. 32 (4), December 1985, 606-628.

¹⁴See Morgan Guaranty Trust, *World Financial Markets*, "LDC Capital flight," March 1986.

¹⁵See Merrill Lynch/ Gemini Consulting, *World Wealth Report* (1997), available at <http://dss2.princeton.edu/data/3161/>.

¹⁶Oliver Wyman Ltd (2008), "The Future of Private Banking. A Wealth Opportunity?" at www.mmc.com/knowledgecenter/OliverWymanFuturePrivateBanking.pdf.

¹⁷Boston Consulting Group (Sept. 15,2009), "Global Wealth Report: Delivering on the Client Promise," summary at <http://www.bcg.com/Media/PressReleaseDetails.aspx?id=tcm:12-28981>

¹⁸See TJN, "On strong assumptions and other nonsense," June 24, 2009, at <http://taxjustice.blogspot.com/2009/06/on-making-strong-assumptions-and-other.html>

¹⁹IMF Publishing Global Portfolio Investment Survey (2000), at <http://www.imf.org/external/np/sec/nb/2000/nb0008.htm>.

²⁰Vito Tanzi, Australian National Radio, March 21 2001, at <http://www.abc.net.au/rn/talks/bbing/stories/s265977.htm>.

²¹"International Narcotics Control Strategy Report," U.S. Department of State Bureau for International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (March 2000), at 565-66.

²²OECD (1998), "Harmful Tax Competition: An Emerging Global Issue," <http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/33/1/1904184.pdf>.

²³ Jeffrey P. Owens, Director, OECD Center for Tax Policy and Administration, "Offshore Tax Evasion," July 20, 2007, Global Policy Forum, at <http://www.globalpolicy.org/component/content/article/172/30123.html>.

²⁴"OECD estimates \$11 trillion parked in tax havens," *Times of India*, April 4 2009, at <http://www.business-standard.com/india/news/oecd-estimates-11-trillion-parked-in-tax-havens/353935/>

²⁵ See OECD (2009), "OECD's Current Tax Agenda," at <http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/38/17/1909369.pdf>, p. 24.

²⁶ Oxfam (2000), "Releasing the Hidden Billions for Poverty Eradication," at http://www.oxfam.org.uk/what_we_do/issues/debt.../tax_havens.htm.

²⁷TJN International (2005), "The Price of Offshore," at http://www.taxjustice.net/cms/upload/pdf/Price_of_Offshore.pdf.

²⁸As discussed below, TJN (2005) based its estimate on scaling up BIS data on offshore deposits by "nonbanks" by an average ratio of "cash and bank deposits" to all financial assets that was based on Merrill Lynch/ CapGemini's annual estimates of asset allocations for high-net worth portfolios.

²⁹"Tax haven crackdown could deliver \$120bn a year to fight poverty -- Oxfam," March 13, 2009, at <http://www.oxfam.org.uk/applications/blogs/pressoffice/?p=3912>.

³⁰See the regional breakdowns of the offshore wealth estimates by the consulting firms. Their estimates are consistent with this market share for the source countries in our sample.

³¹World Bank (2009) data on gross external debt and foreign reserves by country; our analysis.

³²See US IRS, "Remarks by Commissioner Douglas Shulman before the 21st Annual George Washington University International Tax Conference, December 8, 2008."

³³Christian Aid (2008), "Death and Taxes: The True Toll of Tax Dodging," at http://www.christianaid.org.uk/caw08/Report_08_Executive%20Summary.pdf

³⁴See the discussion below – "Estimation Methods."

³⁵This is in contrast to other authors like Cuddington (1986), who have limited their attention to flows that are motivated by some specific factor, like short-term speculation. Since there are so many other possible motives for unrecorded capital, and since the data needs so much work, it seems more appropriate to be a little more open-ended about the measurement.

³⁶See Appendix II: "Explaining Capital Flight."

³⁷See, for example, the significant original research on corporate transfer pricing abuses by Dr. Simon Pak: <http://www.russajournal.com/node/18073>, <http://portal.acm.org/citation.cfm?id=780978>.

³⁸Cf. the tortured history of the "qualified intermediary" regulations for major banks in the US: <http://www.hg.org/article.asp?id=5934>.

³⁹For instance, on the common claim that tax haven secrecy can help citizens escape unjust despots and their like, see our article "The Non-perils of information exchange," July 2009. <http://taxjustice.blogspot.ch/2009/07/non-perils-of-information-exchange.html>.

⁴⁰The Credit Suisse estimate uses Household Balance Sheet data for selected countries, combined with household income and expenditure data, and supplemented by an estimation of wealth holding patterns within nations; it also took information gleaned from various "rich lists" to fill information gaps on wealth holdings at the top of the distribution. From Global Wealth Report, 2011, Credit Suisse Research institute: https://infocus.credit-suisse.com/data/product_documents/shop/323525/2011_global_wealth_report.pdf.

⁴¹For an acerbic summary of the difference between "armchair" and "investigative" economics, see Appendix III. For a review of alternative measures of capital flight, see Florian Kaufmann, op. cit., footnote 2. Most of the alternative measures of "capital flight" appear to be highly correlated. For example, in the case of Mexico, the simple correlation of Federal Reserve's net currency payouts from the San Antonio and El Paso branches (in real \$1980) with a "sources and uses" measure of Mexico's flight from 1970 to 1987 was .69. For changes in U.S. bank liabilities reported as owned by "non-bank" Mexicans, the correlation was .67. For an "errors and omissions" measure of flight -- the sum of short-term private capital outflows plus errors and omissions from the balance of payments account -- the correlation was .67. Statistical regression that controls for other variables yields even stronger results.

⁴²The key assumptions for this capital outflow model are summarized in Appendix III, pp10, 11

⁴³See Appendix III

⁴⁴The Citibanker quote is from my interview with "Mexican Citibanker," July 1988.

⁴⁵See Appendix III

⁴⁶Switzerland probably has the largest number of direct employees in private banking -- about 200,000, according to the Swiss Bankers Association. The global industry estimate is based on our detailed analysis of individual havens and private banking institutions. The industry also creates indirect demand for other business services, including law firms, accounting firms, office services, and travel. We have allowed for this in our estimate.

⁴⁷See www.scribd.com/.../Citigroup-Oct-16-2005-Plutonomy-Report-Part-1.

⁴⁸As of July 2008, before the crash, Euromoney estimated total assets under management for the global private banking industry as a whole at \$11.8 trillion. See: <http://www.euromoney.com/Article/2093990/Private-banking-Methodology.html>. By September 2009 this figure had fallen to \$11.1 trillion. Our sample of the top 50 banks accounted for about \$8 trillion of this. As noted in the text, in addition to AUMs, of course, there are also assets under custody, deposits, and client brokerage assets "under administration," which are on the order of 50 to 80 percent greater than AUMs. So these figures are all consistent with our estimated \$20 trillion for 2009.

⁴⁹From August 2008 through August 2009, the government aid received by the top 21 private banking institutions as a group totaled at least \$393 billion of standby credits, \$939 billion of toxic asset guarantees, and \$592 billion of government capital injections. Government aid to banks, Europe and the U.S., U.S. Federal Reserve, U.S. Treasury, H.M. Treasury, and other central bank official sources, our analysis.

⁵⁰It is interesting to note that the precursors of Citigroup, JPMorganChase, BankAmerica, and Goldman Sachs were all deeply involved in lending to finance stock market speculation in 1928-29. Citibank's chairman at the time, "Sunshine Charlie" Mitchell, was described by a US Senator as "more than any 50 men, responsible for the stock market crash."

⁵¹See TJN (2005), op. cit., "The Price of Offshore," p. 1, which incorrectly use "\$2.7 trillion" for the value of "offshore deposits" in June 2004. The actual figure for "offshore deposits by nonbanks" was \$4.05 trillion. (See *BIS Quarterly Survey*, December 2004, Table 1.)

⁵²This BIS data on cross-border deposit liabilities is limited to reports obtained from just 30 offshore financial centers, and may therefore be regarded as conservative.

⁵³These estimates for 2010 exclude other non-financial very important forms of offshore wealth like non-residential real estate, "alternative investments," and collectibles. As noted, for 2004, TJN added another \$2 trillion to its \$9.5 trillion figure for financial assets to account for real estate, but nothing to allow for offshore alternative investments and collectibles. According to ML/CapGemini, non-residential real estate and alternative investments may add another 25% to 38% to HNWI's wealth portfolios, although the "offshore" portfolio shares are lower.

⁵⁴See Appendix III

⁵⁵Epstein (2005) is heretofore the most comprehensive capital flight estimates to date, but his estimates are subject to many objections. First, Epstein (2005) omits key countries that are leading source of flight capital -- notably, Russia, Mexico, Venezuela, and Argentina. Like GFI, he also employs the so-called "Boyce-Ndikumana adjustment" for "mis-invoicing," which I find very problematic. For several countries, like China and Malaysia, this adjustment alone accounted for several hundred billion in additional imputed "flight." The adjustment, which is based on the IMF's Direction of Trade statistics, assumes a constant "normal" 10 percent cif/fob ratio for all developing country trade with the First World. It then takes all the First World exports to a specific developing country that are reported in the IMF's Director of Trade Statistics, and scales them up by this ratio, compares the resulting "adjusted exports" figure with the reported First World imports by a specific country, and attributes any resulting gap to "import over-invoicing." It then extrapolates from this First World-developing country gap to the country's entire trade balance, on the assumption that First World trade data are accurate.

My inspection of the UN's Commodity Trade Statistics data base (<http://unstats.un.org/unsd/comtrade>) which has detailed information on actual fob/cif ratios by country and commodity, reveals that the 1.1 ratio assumption is often wildly inaccurate, and that it fluctuates over time, even for a given commodity family. There may also be timing and quality differences that affect the data -- for example, exports tend to be recorded earlier than imports, and with less accuracy, because of the incentives to collect import duties and enforce quotas. This biases our estimates of "import over-invoicing" upwards. In the case of China, as discussed in the text, there are also serious problems involved in separating out trade with Hong Kong, a key transshipment point. See also Frank R. Gunter (2003), "Capital Flight from China 1984-2001," June 2003, Leigh University. Much more research at the individual country level and commodity level is needed to resolve this issue, so for the moment, we believe that the safer course is to omit the adjustment entirely.

Epstein (2005)'s estimates for China also appear to be vastly overstated, even without the mis-invoicing adjustment, because of the way Hong Kong is treated in China's balance of payments statistics. Epstein (2005) also attempt to correct for the fact that some countries' debts are partly denominated in non-dollar currencies.

Finally, for most countries, Epstein's estimates start in 1980 and leave off in 2001, while ours extend from 1970 to 2010.

⁵⁶TJN International Conference on Transfer Pricing, Helsinki, Finland, June 13-14, 2012.

⁵⁷These factors pertaining to the GFI analysis of trade misinvoicing are summarized in Appendix III,

⁵⁸See Appendix III

⁵⁹See Appendix III, various charts

⁶⁰See Appendix III

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20120801-05	18:05	Art	"Study: Romney Tax Plan Would Result in Cuts for Rich, Higher Burden for Others"
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For those of you who have wondered just how Mr. Romney's publicly stated plan to reduce taxes for the super rich and increase Defense spending will address the deficit issue, well, apparently it won't. What it will do is make the rich somewhat richer and the rest of us somewhat poorer.

The Brookings Institution is an old and pretty well balanced think tank so I don't the below is some kind of political spin. It just represents common sense.

Let's see now, the Republicans want to deny basic rights for women such as equal pay for equal work, not to mention control over their own bodies, they want to get rid of those sub human immigrants wherever possible and stop minorities (also pretty much sub human) from voting and now we know that they think 95% of us should pay more taxes to help the rich. Who the heck besides the very rich would vote for these guys? Oh yeah, I forgot, the racists and religious intolerant tea party folks. We really need a white guy.

"Study: Romney Tax Plan Would Result in Cuts for Rich, Higher Burden for Others" by Lori Montgomery, *The Washington Post*

Aug. 1, 2012, (http://www.washingtonpost.com/business/economy/study-romney-tax-plan-would-result-in-cuts-for-rich-higher-burden-for-others/2012/08/01/gJQAbeCCOX_story.html)

Mitt Romney's plan to overhaul the tax code would produce cuts for the richest 5 percent of Americans — and bigger bills for everybody else, according to an independent analysis set for release Wednesday.

The study was conducted by researchers at the nonpartisan Tax Policy Center, a joint project of the Brookings Institution and the Urban Institute, who seem to bend over backward to be fair to the Republican presidential candidate. To cover the cost of his plan — which would reduce tax rates by 20 percent, repeal the estate tax and eliminate taxes on investment income for middle-class taxpayers — the researchers assume that Romney would go after breaks for the richest taxpayers first.

They even look at what would happen if Republicans' dreams for tax reform came true and the proposal generated significant revenue through economic growth.

None of it helped Romney. His rate-cutting plan for individuals would reduce tax collections by about \$360 billion in 2015, the study says. To avoid increasing deficits — as Romney has pledged — the plan would have to generate an equivalent amount of revenue by slashing tax breaks for mortgage interest, employer-provided health care, education, medical expenses, state and local taxes, and child care — all breaks that benefit the middle class.

"It is not mathematically possible to design a revenue-neutral plan that preserves current incentives for savings and investment and that does not result in a net tax cut for high-income taxpayers and a net tax increase for lower- and/or middle-income taxpayers," the study concludes.

Even if tax breaks “are eliminated in a way designed to make the resulting tax system as progressive as possible, there would still be a shift in the tax burden of roughly \$86 billion [a year] from those making over \$200,000 to those making less” than that.

What would that mean for the average tax bill? Millionaires would get an \$87,000 tax cut, the study says. But for 95 percent of the population, taxes would go up by about 1.2 percent, an average of \$500 a year.

The Romney campaign on Wednesday declined to address the specifics of the analysis, dismissing it as a “liberal study.” Campaign officials noted that one of the three authors, Adam Looney of Brookings, served as a senior economist on the Obama Council of Economic Advisers. The other two authors are Samuel Brown and William Gale, both of whom are affiliated with Brookings and the Tax Policy Center.

“President Obama continues to tout liberal studies calling for more tax hikes and more government spending. We’ve been down that road before – and it’s led us to 41 straight months of unemployment above 8 percent,” said Romney campaign spokesman Ryan Williams. “It’s clear that the only plan President Obama has is more of the same. Mitt Romney believes that lower tax rates and less government will jump-start the economy and create jobs.”

20120801-06	18:48	SteveB	“Reckless Romney”
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[“Reckless Romney” by Fred Kaplan, Slate](#)

Aug. 1, 2012,

http://www.slate.com/articles/news_and_politics/war_stories/2012/08/mitt_romney_s_three_country_overseas_trip_revealed_a_republican_candidate_whose_foreign_policy_ideas_are_either_mysterious_or_reckless.html

(Mitt’s world tour revealed more than his gaffes. His foreign-policy ideas are actually quite scary.)

Mitt Romney is back home from his three-country world tour, and the question must be asked: Has any presidential candidate—has any American politician of stature—splashed in so many muddy puddles along the way?

Looking back at the voyage, the “gaffes” in London (which weren’t so much gaffes as revelations of Romney’s character) turned out to be not the afterburn of jetlag, as some of his aides suggested, but rather a preview of coming attractions.

Jerusalem should have been as easy as London should have been. There’s a time-honored shtick for politicians’ visits to the Holy Land: don the yarmulke, slide a note into the Wailing Wall, make a speech about the grave threat from Iran and America’s unshakeable commitment to Israel, bask in the applause, and off you go.

Romney did all that, but then went one further. Speaking in a tone of wistful admiration, he attributed Israel’s wealth and technological prowess—and the absence of such glories in the Palestinian territories—to “culture” and “the hand of Providence.”

Much has since been written about the ensuing uproar, especially from Palestinians, who found the remark racist (though less than I would have thought from members of my own tribe, who usually bristle when a Gentile swoons over their knack for making money). Culture does have some bearing on the issue. But it takes a certain kind of blindness not to see—or, in Romney’s case, not to mention—the role of occupation and blockade in the thwarted progress of Palestinians, a creative and well-educated people.

Romney later said that he “did not speak about the Palestinian culture,” but of course he did. If someone says whites are better off than blacks because of culture, they are very clearly talking about black culture as well as white culture.

This leads to another, more vital question that the Romney trip raises: Does the candidate believe the things he says? Has he thought through their implications? Or is he simply pandering to the audience of the moment? In

other words, is he shallow, or is he cynical? It's an important question for someone who's campaigning hard to be president.

Romney took this trip to pass a fairly simple test: to demonstrate a bedrock comfort and competence on the world stage. He failed that test, so he should at least be clear about another trait worth knowing about a presidential candidate: his beliefs. In Romney's case, it's still a mystery what they are.

If he really believes that Israelis are superior to Palestinians (and, let's not mince words, that is what his remarks amounted to), what does that imply for the prospect of Israeli-Palestinian peace talks in a Romney administration? If he believes that "the hand of Providence" led Jews to the Promised Land, how does he define that land? Does it include what some right-wing religious Jews call "Greater Israel," and if so, does he therefore support the expansion, or at least oppose the restriction, of settlements?

Then there was his pledge to recognize Jerusalem as Israel's true capital and to relocate the U.S. Embassy from Tel Aviv. Does Romney know that every American president, dating back to Harry Truman, has declined to take a position on Jerusalem's status precisely because it's in dispute (at the time with Jordan)? Or that the Oslo accords of 1993, in an update of this acknowledgment, stated that the city's status must be resolved through Israeli-Palestinian negotiations?

In short, does Romney realize that he's promising to overturn 64 years of U.S. foreign policy, the 19-year-old Oslo accords, and the basic premise of a two-state solution (which most Israelis favor)?

Or, like many American politicians who make this same pledge on their brief stopovers, was he merely pandering? (At least he didn't promise to free Jonathan Pollard, yet.)

A puzzling notion has taken hold in the American press, including most recently in an otherwise thoughtful New York Times article by Peter Baker, that Romney's views on foreign policy are barely a hair's breadth of distance from President Obama's, that they differ more in "degree and tone" than in substance. This is nonsense, on several grounds—and the Romneyshambles tour underscored the contrasts.

First, on many issues, Romney has articulated no views at all, except contradictory ones. He has criticized Obama for withdrawing prematurely from Afghanistan, but has also said he'd abide by the same 2014 deadline (which NATO set at Afghan President Hamid Karzai's request). He has blamed Obama for causing "the Arab winter" (as he calls it), but hasn't explained how he would have handled the uprisings differently or controlled their outcomes any better. (Would he have bolstered Hosni Mubarak's regime in Egypt? Funneled more aid to the rebels? In either case, how, and to what end?)

Second, there are many crucial issues on which the two disagree profoundly. Romney has denounced Russia as America's "number-one geopolitical foe" and assailed the New START arms-reduction treaty as a danger to national security. U.S.-Russian relations aren't without their tensions, but the realms of cooperation opened up by Obama's "reset" policy—on trade, counterterrorism, nuclear nonproliferation, Iranian sanctions, among others—are well worth preserving. Romney has said he would declare China to be a "currency manipulator," which could well unleash a trade war that we cannot afford. He has called for spending 4 percent of GNP on the military, as distinguished from Obama's 3 percent, without saying how he would spend it or where he would get the extra \$1 trillion over the next six years.

Not least, there is the issue of Iran. It is often stated that both Romney and Obama call for ratcheting up sanctions against Iran and for taking no military option "off the table." But Romney went further than this on his European trip, or at least his senior foreign-policy adviser Dan Senor did. "If Israel has to take action on its own," Senor said in a briefing before Romney's speech in Jerusalem, "the governor would respect that decision."

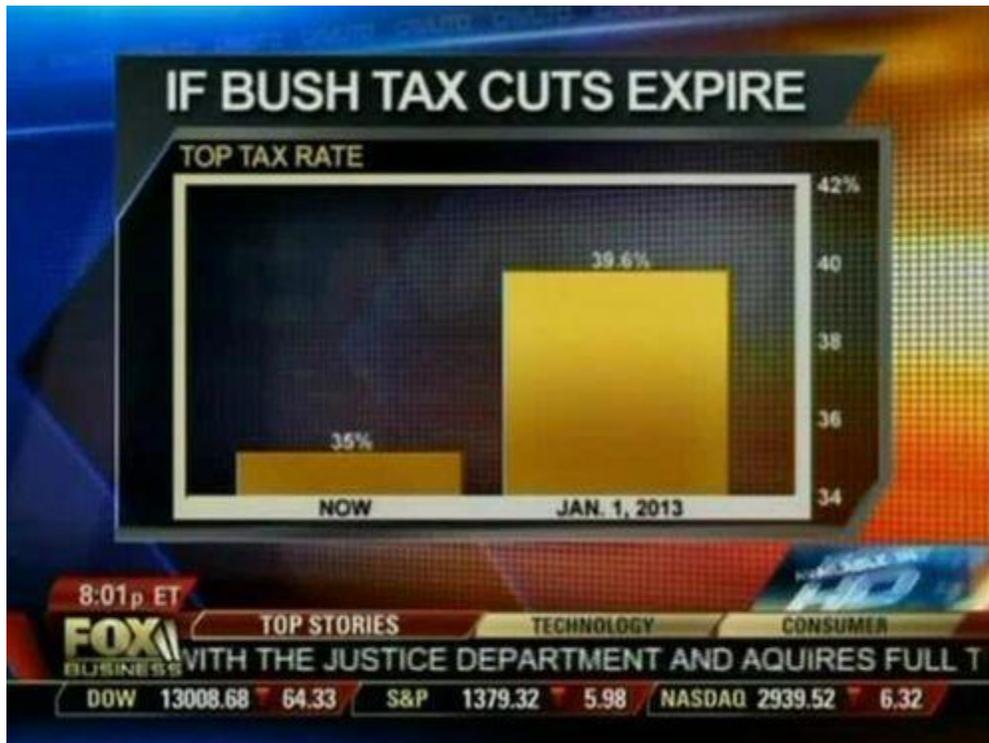
This is a very different stance from current U.S. policy. Obama has sent his top military officials to Israel several times, has made repeated assurances to Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, and has re-upped security assistance to the Israeli Defense Forces, precisely to dissuade Israel from attacking the Iranian nuclear sites on its own. The Joint Chiefs of Staff have war-gamed this scenario, and have told their Israeli counterparts the results: Israel, they say, may have a good first couple of days, then their world goes to hell—multiple terrorist attacks, a cut-off of oil

supplies, a strengthening of the mullahs' regime, and (this is the twister) a resumption of Iran's nuclear program within a few years.

Iran's nuclear program may be the knottiest issue in the world. The trade-offs are harrowing, and Israel's worries are hardly baseless. But it's the height of irresponsibility for a presidential candidate, or his top foreign policy aide, to give the Israelis a green light to attack. (Senor later backpedaled a bit, saying that "take action" didn't necessarily mean military action, but what else could it possibly mean? Sanctions? Already doing that. Cyber-attacks to screw up their centrifuges? Doing that too.)

So in comparing Romney's foreign policy to Obama's, a more accurate formulation might be: They're the same, except when Romney's is more reckless or mysterious. Not a good bumper sticker.

20120801-07 21:54 SteveG Graphic: Fox News Distortion of Reality



<http://www.besttourism.com/items/di/293?title=Niagara-Falls-in-USA&b=42>



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

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FRIENDS OF THE MIDDLE NEWSLETTER #196 — AUG. 3, 2012

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INDEX: Click here.

Will He Get Away With It?

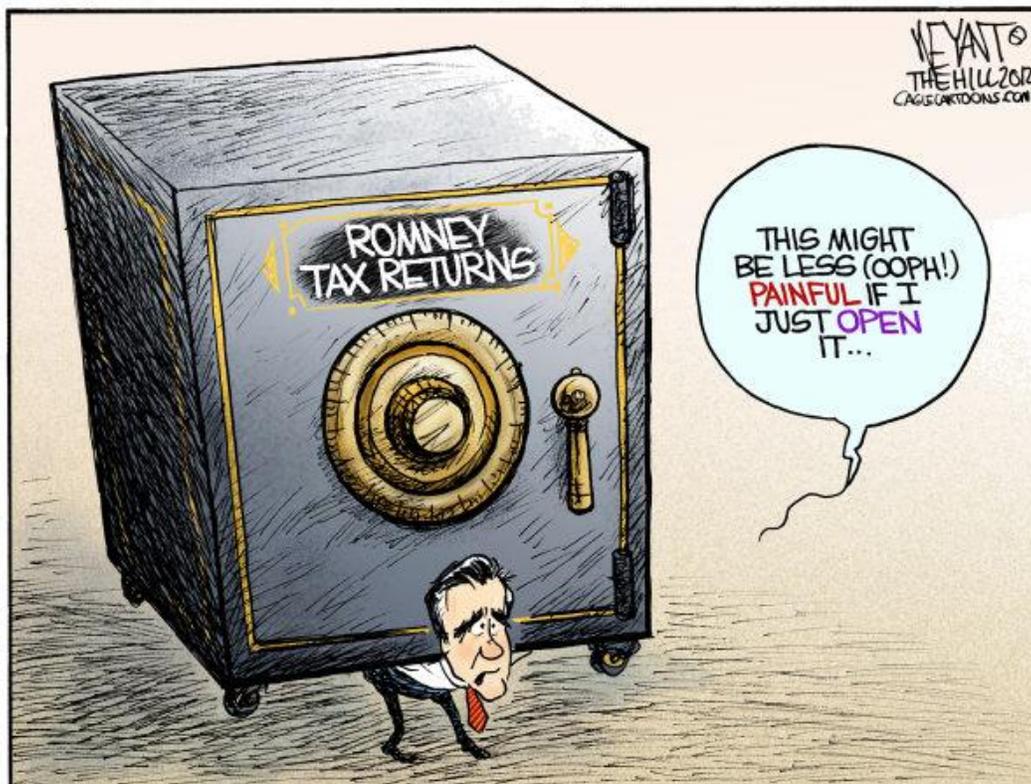
(posted by Steven W. Baker / SteveB, Aug. 3, 2012)

Everyone knows our “#1 Foreign Affairs Expert” is hiding something big. For how much longer?

“10 Theories About What Mitt Romney’s Really Hiding in Those Tax Returns” by Joshua Holland, AlterNet

Aug. 1, 2012, (<http://www.alternet.org/election-2012/10-theories-about-what-mitt-romneys-really-hiding-those-tax-returns>)

Everyone knows it's something that would damage an already weak candidate, but nobody knows exactly what it is.



Mitt Romney knows how to do a cost-benefit analysis, and he's determined that it's better to be dogged by reporters for failing to release his tax returns for the duration of the 2012 campaign than it is to make the documents public. Never mind that a majority of Americans – and a third of Republicans – think he should come clean.

It's beyond obvious that whatever's in those returns must be enough to do serious damage to Romney, or even sink his candidacy completely.

What might it be, exactly? In the vacuum Romney has created by not disclosing, any number of theories have been floated as to what his returns could reveal. For your convenience, we've collected 10 theories that are making the rounds in the political press.

1. Mormon Tithes

Mormons are expected to fork over 10 percent of their income to the Church of Latter Day Saints. And that fact leads us to two theories.

First, Rachel Zoll of the Associated Press speculated [3] that Romney doesn't want to remind evangelical Christians that he belongs to what many consider a non-Christian "cult." "The Republican candidate's commitment to the church is a double-edged sword in the contest for the presidential nomination," she wrote. "Many GOP voters are Christians who do not consider Mormons to be part of historic Christianity. Romney supporters worry that details of his church donations contained in the tax returns could fuel opposition to him based on his religion."

But it may be the other way around – perhaps he doesn't want to piss off Mormons. After all, the right-wing *Daily Caller* reported that in 2010 and 2011, the two years for which Romney released partial returns, it looks like the former Mormon bishop under-tithed the church, paying 7 percent of his income one year and 9.7 percent over the two-year period. As the *Caller* noted [4], "Romney recently told Fox News Sunday host Chris Wallace, 'I made a commitment to my church a long, long time ago that I would give 10 percent of my income to the church, and I've followed through on that commitment. So, if I had given less than 10 percent, then I think people would have to look at me and say, 'Hey, what's wrong with you fella — don't you follow through on your promises?'"

Of course, if he were sheltering additional income in offshore accounts, then the degree to which the *Caller* says he shortchanged the Mormons might be even greater.

2. Things That Might Infuriate the Base

Mitt Romney, who just four years ago was dubbed the "conservative alternative" to John McCain is probably, as he claims, "severely conservative." But when he wanted to become governor of Massachusetts, he played to that state's politics, swearing to protect a woman's right to choose, saying that climate change isn't a socialist plot and generally being reasonable. He passed the precursor to Obamacare, which he now condemns as a sign of looming tyranny.

Rick Newman at *US News and World Report* wonders [5] whether Romney really stopped supporting those causes when he claims to have converted himself into a far-right Republican. Could he have a bunch of itemized deductions to, say, Planned Parenthood listed on those returns? We'd be wrong not to speculate.

3. Harry Reid, Lazy Blogger

That's how Wonkette characterized [6] Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid's unsourced, second-hand rumor that Mitt Romney paid no taxes at all over a 10-year period. (This is very unlikely, due to the Alternative Minimum Tax.)

But many, many people have speculated that the reason Mitt doesn't want to reveal his tax returns is that they will show that he paid a significantly lower rate than his campaign has claimed in the years prior to 2010.

4. It's the IRAs

Mitt Romney has an Individual Retirement Account, just like you probably do! But unlike you, Mitt has somewhere between \$20 and \$101 million in his account.

We know that the maximum amount one can contribute to an IRA account is \$17,000 per year (employers can match that with up to \$30,000). So that would be a pretty impressive performance – what an investor!

Or what a cheat. Michael Graetz, a professor of tax law at Columbia University and a former official in the senior Bush's Treasury Department, suggested [7] that to get such a fat IRA, "we have to presume that Mr. Romney valued the assets he put in his retirement account at far less than he would have sold them for."

He continues:

The I.R.A. also allows Mr. Romney to diversify his large holdings tax-free, avoiding the 15 percent tax on capital gains that would otherwise apply. His financial disclosure further reveals that his I.R.A. freed him from paying currently the 35 percent income tax on hundreds of thousands of dollars of interest income each year.

5. The Mini-Mitts

Graetz has a second theory about what Mitt might be hiding, and it also has to do with dramatically undervaluing his assets in order to screw over Uncle Sam.

It has to do with a trust he set up for his five sons in 1995. Graetz explains that until this year, there was a \$1 million life-time exemption on such gifts, and after that they should have been taxed at between 29-44 percent. So Mitt would have been on the hook for between \$29 and \$44 million in gift taxes.

"Based on his aggressive tax planning," writes Graetz, "my bet is that — if Mr. Romney filed a gift tax return for these transfers at all — he put a low or even zero value on the gifts, certainly a small fraction of the price at which he would have sold the transferred assets to an unrelated party."

Wouldn't he get busted with such a brazen strategy to avoid paying taxes? After all, that's some pretty serious tax fraud. Well, catching Mitt in this kind of scheme might be harder than one would think. Graetz explains that "every good tax professional knows that gift tax returns are rarely audited, except after the transferer's death. And normally the I.R.S. cannot challenge such a return after three years from its filing."

6. Is It All About 2009?

BusinessWeek's Joshua Green thinks Romney may not want to reveal his taxes for one year in particular – 2009. That's because Romney probably took some significant losses when the economy crashed in 2008. Green explains [8]:

It's possible he suffered a large enough capital loss that, carried forward and coupled with his various offshore tax havens, he wound up paying no U.S. federal taxes at all in 2009. If true, this would be politically deadly for him...

The "zero tax in 2009" theory—again, this is sheer speculation—gains further sustenance when you consider it's the only year for which nobody knows anything about Romney's taxes. He's revealed what's in his 2010 and 2011 returns, and he reportedly submitted 20-some years' worth of returns to the McCain campaign when he was being vetted for vice president in 2008. Steve Schmidt, McCain's chief strategist in that campaign, said on MSNBC,,, that while he didn't examine Romney's

returns himself, nothing that McCain's vetters found in them disqualified Romney from consideration.

7. CEO, President and Chairman of Bain

You probably know that Mitt claims he retired – or perhaps retired “retroactively” – from Bain Capital in 1999. You probably also know that almost three years later, as the Huffington Post reported [9], “Romney was listed as the CEO, chairman and president of the company... in documents filed with the Securities and Exchange Commission; took a six-figure salary; signed corporate documents related to major and minor deals and attended board meetings for at least two Bain-affiliated companies.”

It's possible that releasing his returns could clarify exactly what involvement he had with Bain after 1999. And that might reveal that Romney was, contrary to his claims [10], involved in Bain's decision to invest in Stericycle, a medical waste company that disposed of aborted fetuses. Ben LaBolt, an Obama campaign spokesman, told Fox News: “If he released more documents, like further tax returns, we would know the extent of his involvement at Bain during this period.”

8. Is Mitt a Felon?

Relatedly, in 2011, Mitt Romney signed a financial disclosure form and sent it to the Federal Election Commission. In it, he stated emphatically that he had no active role in the company after February 1999. That claim appears to be contradicted by a number of other documents.

It's a felony to lie on an FEC financial disclosure form [11]. Some forms of tax evasion are also felonies. Mitt's tax returns might offer proof that he committed a crime.

9. Are There Other Non-Disclosures?

There's lying on a disclosure form, and then there's not filing required forms. The *LA Times* reports [12] that “at least 23 funds and partnerships listed in [Mitt's] 2010 tax returns did not show up or were not listed in the same fashion on Romney's most recent financial disclosure, including 11 based in low-tax foreign countries such as Bermuda, the Cayman Islands and Luxembourg.”

More tax returns might reveal other investments that Romney has failed to disclose, as he is required to do by law.

10. There's Nothing – It's Just His Sense of Entitlement

Esquire's James Wolcott doesn't think there's any there [13]. Sure, Romney's tax returns would provide an object lesson in how the ultra-rich avoid paying their fair share of taxes, but everyone already knows that those at the top of the pile game the system. For Wolcott, the issue comes down to Romney refusing to bow to the little people on principle.

It is helpful always to remind yourself that, in the mind of Willard Romney, there are only two kinds of people — himself and his family, and the Help. Throughout his career, and especially throughout his brief political career, Romney has treated the Help with a kind of lordly disdain...

The Help has no right to go pawing through the family books, giggling at the obvious loopholes and tax dodges, running amok through all the tax shelters, and probably getting their chocolate-y fingerprints all over the pages of the Romney family ledger. And, certainly, those members of the Help in the employ of the president of the United States, who is also part of the Help, have no right to use the nearly comically ostentatious wealth of the Romney as some sort of scimey political weapon. He does not have to answer to the Help. I mean, jeepers, he's running for office.

This isn't stubbornness. That's often an acquired trait. What this is, fundamentally, is contempt. Contempt for the process, and contempt for the people who make their living in that process, and contempt for the people whose lives depend on that process. There are rules for the Help with which Willard Romney never has had to abide, and he has no intention of starting now. My dear young fellow, this simply is not done.

The Most Likely Explanation

Given Romney's refusal to release his returns, this kind of speculation is entirely predictable. But the most likely reason Romney doesn't want to release his returns is that they'll cast a bright light on the aggressive tax avoidance strategies the super-rich use every day – strategies David Cay Johnston outlined so well in his excellent book, *Perfectly Legal* [14]. The Romney campaign keeps assuring us that he paid all taxes required by law, and that very well might be the problem.

A *Vanity Fair* investigation [15] into the trickle of tax documents that Romney has disclosed – under intense pressure – found that they “provided a lavish smorgasbord for Romney’s critics. Particularly jarring were the Romneys’ many offshore accounts.”

To give but one example, there is a Bermuda-based entity called Sankaty High Yield Asset Investors Ltd., which has been described in securities filings as “a Bermuda corporation wholly owned by W. Mitt Romney.” It could be that Sankaty is an old vehicle with little importance, but Romney appears to have treated it rather carefully. He set it up in 1997, then transferred it to his wife’s newly created blind trust on January 1, 2003, the day before he was inaugurated as Massachusetts’s governor. The director and president of this entity is R. Bradford Malt, the trustee of the blind trust and Romney’s personal lawyer. Romney failed to list this entity on several financial disclosures, even though such a closely held entity would not qualify as an “excepted investment fund” that would not need to be on his disclosure forms. He finally included it on his 2010 tax return. Even after examining that return, we have no idea what is in this company, but it could be valuable, meaning that it is possible Romney’s wealth is even greater than previous estimates. While the Romneys’ spokespeople insist that the couple has paid all the taxes required by law, investments in tax havens such as Bermuda raise many questions, because they are in “jurisdictions where there is virtually no tax and virtually no compliance,” as one Miami-based offshore lawyer put it.

While James Wolcott thinks that it's “hardly a secret anymore” that “our tax code — and, indeed, our entire economic system — has been gamed to benefit the folks in Romney's economic stratum,” most people probably don't have a firm grasp on precisely how the vaunted “job creators” avoid paying their fair share, and the release of Romney's returns would offer a teachable moment.

As real estate billionaire Leona Helmsley once said, “Only the little people pay taxes.” That's not the message Mitt Romney wants to convey during a campaign that has a lot to do with tax cuts for the wealthiest.

Links:

[1] <http://www.alternet.org>

[2] <http://www.alternet.org/authors/joshua-holland>

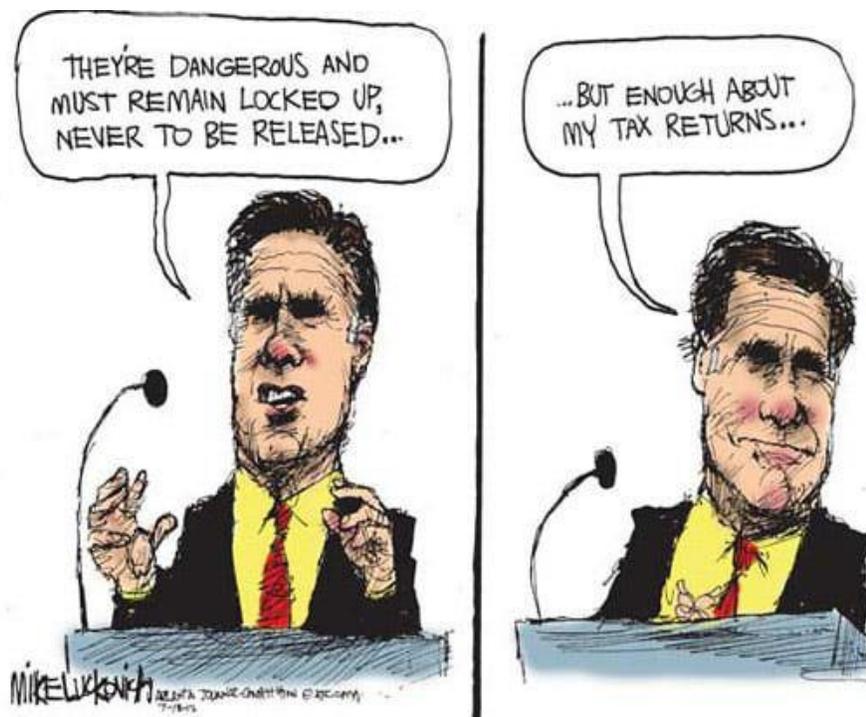
[3] http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/01/25/romney-tax-returns-mormon_n_1230613.html

[4] <http://dailycaller.com/2012/01/24/romney-tax-returns-indicate-that-he-underpaid-mormon-church-tithe/#ixzz22KIraVGR>

[5] <http://www.usnews.com/news/blogs/rick-newman/2012/07/19/what-might-be-hiding-in-mitt-romneys-tax-returns>

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- [18] <http://www.alternet.org/tags/taxes-0>



What have people read about the rumor that Mitt Romney paid zero taxes for ten years?

How long have Olympic athletes received stipends for winning gold (\$25,000), silver (\$15,000), and bronze (\$10,000) medals? To this point they are to pay taxes on their money. Yesterday Marco Rubio introduced a bill to make the Olympic stipends tax free. Is this a knee jerk reaction for politics in an election year given that Phelps has gotten over \$40 million out of his swimming career, the basketball teams is primarily NBA players, Ann Romney has written her horse off as a business?

20120802-02 11:28 SteveM "Could 2012 Be America's Last Presidential Election?"

[As usual, the Right tries to disguise their plans and strategies with the lying claim that their plans and strategies are those of their opponents. It's an interesting ruse from a psychological perspective. You see, it's all a left-wing conspiracy disguised to look like a right-wing conspiracy. I guess Republicans never progressed beyond the John Birch Society. They love their conspiracy theories! –SteveB]

"Could 2012 be America's Last Presidential Election?" by Michael Savage, Free Republic/World Press

March 8, 2012, (<http://www.freerepublic.com/focus/bloggers/2860316/posts>)

I've asked this question to a number of people and most them respond as if I were crazy for asking. They tell me that this is America , land of the free and that there will always be elections. I tell them that we are no longer the land of the free and that if Obama gets re-elected in 2012, that this just may be America `s last election. In the past three years, the Obama administration has been very carefully crafting the nation for a political take over by his Marxist regime and this isn't just my opinion.

Popular radio talk show host Michael Savage is the son of Russian immigrants and is very familiar with Soviet and European history. Savage warned his listeners this week saying, "I have to tell you that if this man, God forbid, is the next president of the United States, we're going to be living in something along the lines of – people say Europe. I don't believe it's going to be like Europe – I think it will be closer to Chavez's South American dictatorship.

"This is the most corrupt, incompetent, dangerous tyrannical administration in American history. It's not politics as usual. It's not just Democrats versus Republicans. Obama has a long history of being at odds with American values and with America itself and the core principles of this country. They don't want government-sponsored opinions. They only want government-sponsored 'Pravda.' That's exactly what the government-media complex tells you on a daily basis – nothing but the government-media complex party line. Pay attention. Your freedom may be at stake."

Over the weekend, Republican presidential candidate Rick Santorum told a small group of people in an Iowa coffee house that, "Barack Obama is not incompetent, ladies and gentleman. He knows exactly what he's doing and why he's doing it. He sees America differently than you see America . [Obama] has gone out of his way to divide this country in a way I haven't seen since the Great Depression when Franklin Roosevelt went around to divide his country. That's his hero. What makes America great [in Obama's mind is that] the government takes money from somebody and gives it to somebody else. No, that's what makes America , France."

With his control over the Executive and Judicial branches of the government, the stage is set for a complete takeover of the government. Think about it. Since taking office, instead of helping the economy, Obama has purposely escalated the economic crisis by plunging the country into unprecedented debt. He has a number of programs that are designed to go into effect in January 2013, just in time for his second term of office. The economic burden and increased taxes on everyone will be enough to cause the final economic collapse of the country. As soon as that happens, Obama declares Martial Law and assumes dictatorial control of the nation.

The Department of Justice has already been subverting federal laws to strip us of a number of freedoms. The Supreme Court and many of the other federal courts have been seeded with socialistic liberal judges that will rule in Obama's favor on virtually anything, thus ending constitutional rule and law.

He's already changing the face of America's military. Allowing homosexuals to openly serve along with changing the retirement program is causing many conservative military leaders to resign commissions and leave the military.

Some Pentagon officials are also noting that an increase in the enlistment of radical Muslims into the US military where they get all the training they need on weapons and defense systems.. We have no idea how many of them there are in the armed forces or in what positions they may hold.

Obama has been wielding executive powers this past year as if he were already a dictator. When Congress is not doing his bidding, he simply bypasses them and used an executive order to accomplish it anyway. This has set the stage for his disbandment of Congress. He would not be the first world leader to take control of a nation and disband the legislative branch of government.

He has been effectively using the media to anesthetize the public to the dangers he poses. Like a patient being prepped for surgery, people are numb to the changes and won't have a clue what took place until they wake up in recovery and realize that free America has been removed and replaced with a regime that may parallel those of Stalin, Lenin, Mussolini, Hitler, Chavez and Castro.

For the sake of our children and grandchildren, vote him out!

20120802-04	14:12	SteveB	Re: "Could 2012 Be America's Last Presidential Election?" (reply to SteveM, above)
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This is the biggest bunch of lies I think I've ever seen in one place!

Heaven help us if Mr. Tax-Cheat wins!

20120802-06	16:01	SteveM	Re: "Could 2012 Be America's Last Presidential Election?" (reply to SteveB, above)
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If anyone would know about lies it would be you. You've swallowed enough of them

20120802-08	22:45	SteveB	Re: "Could 2012 Be America's Last Presidential Election?" (reply to SteveM, above)
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No. It is really very simple.

I seek the truth in all things. My work proves that.

You seek to destroy one good man. Your emails prove that. They show no regard for the truth whatsoever. I've proven them to be lies and distortions time and time again.

You have yet to refute one point I've ever made. Your election predictions also have left something to be desired.

But I am always willing to listen and reconsider. Are you?

20120802-03	13:56	SteveB	From the Right: "Obama's Signature Move: Unsealing Private Records"
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"Obama's Signature Move: Unsealing Private Records" by Ann Coulter, *Human Events*

Aug. 1, 2012, (<http://www.humanevents.com/2012/08/01/ann-coulter-obamas-signature-move-unsealing-private-records/>)

Mitt Romney presents one enormous problem for Barack Obama's campaign: No divorce records. That's why the media are so hot to get their hands on Romney's tax records for the past 25 years. They need something to "pick through, distort and lie about" — as the Republican candidate says.

Obama's usual campaign method, used in 100 percent of his races, has been to pry into the private records of his opponents.

Democrats aren't going to find any personal dirt on the clean-cut Mormon, so they need complicated tax filings going back decades in order to create the illusion of scandal out of boring financial records.

Romney has already released his 2010 tax return and is about to release his 2011 return. After all the huffing and puffing by the media demanding those returns, the follow-up story vanished remarkably quickly when the only thing the return showed was that Romney pays millions of dollars in taxes and gives a lot of money to charity.

Let's take a romp down memory lane and review the typical Obama campaign strategy. Obama became a U.S. senator only by virtue of David Axelrod's former employer, the Chicago Tribune, ripping open the sealed divorce records of Obama's two principal opponents.

One month before the 2004 Democratic primary for the U.S. Senate, Obama was down in the polls, about to lose to Blair Hull, a multimillionaire securities trader. But then the Chicago Tribune leaked the claim that Hull's second ex-wife, Brenda Sexton, had sought an order of protection against him during their 1998 divorce proceedings.

Those records were under seal, but as The New York Times noted: "The Tribune reporter who wrote the original piece later acknowledged in print that the Obama camp had 'worked aggressively behind the scenes' to push the story." Many people said Axelrod had "an even more significant role — that he leaked the initial story."

Both Hull and his ex-wife opposed releasing their sealed divorce records, but they finally relented in response to the media's hysteria — 18 days before the primary. Hull was forced to spend four minutes of a debate detailing the abuse allegation in his divorce papers, explaining that his ex-wife "kicked me in the leg and I hit her shin to try to get her to not continue to kick me."

After having held a substantial lead just a month before the primary, Hull's campaign collapsed with the chatter about his divorce. Obama sailed to the front of the pack and won the primary. Hull finished third with 10 percent of the vote.

As luck would have it, Obama's opponent in the general election had also been divorced! Jack Ryan was tall, handsome, Catholic — and shared a name with one of Harrison Ford's most popular onscreen characters! He went to Dartmouth, Harvard Law and Harvard Business School, made hundreds of millions of dollars as a partner at Goldman Sachs, and then, in his early 40s, left investment banking to teach at an inner city school on the South Side of Chicago.

Ryan would have walloped Obama in the Senate race. But at the request of — again — the Chicago Tribune, California Judge Robert Schnider unsealed the custody papers in Ryan's divorce five years earlier from Hollywood starlet Jeri Lynn Ryan, the bombshell Borg on "Star Trek: Voyager."

Jack Ryan had released his tax records. He had released his divorce records. But both he and his ex-wife sought to keep the custody records under seal to protect their son.

Amid the 400 pages of filings from the custody case, Jack Ryan claimed that his wife had had an affair, and she counterclaimed with the allegation that he had taken her to "sex clubs" in Paris, New York and New Orleans, which drove her to fall in love with another man.

(Republicans: If you plan a career in public office, please avoid marrying a wacko.)

Ryan had vehemently denied her allegations at the time, but it didn't matter. The sex club allegations aired on "Entertainment Tonight," "NBC Nightly News," ABC's "Good Morning America," "The Tonight Show With Jay Leno," and NBC's "Today" show. CNN covered the story like it was the first moon landing.

(Interestingly, international papers also were ablaze with the story — the same newspapers that were supposed to be so bored with American sexual mores during Bill Clinton's sex scandal.)

Four days after Judge Schnider unsealed the custody records, Ryan dropped out of the race for the horror of (allegedly) propositioning his own wife and then taking "no" for an answer.

Alan Keyes stepped in as a last-minute Republican candidate.

And that's how Obama became a U.S. senator. He destroyed both his Democratic primary opponent and his Republican general election opponent with salacious allegations about their personal lives taken from "sealed" court records.

Obama's team delved into Sarah Palin's marriage and spread rumors of John McCain's alleged affair in 2008 and they smeared Herman Cain in 2011 with hazy sexual harassment allegations all emanating from David Axelrod's pals in Chicago.

It's almost like a serial killer's signature. Unsealed personal records have been released to the press. Obama must be running for office!

So you can see what a pickle the Obama campaign is in having to run against a Dudley Do-Right, non-drinking, non-smoking, God-fearing, happily married Mormon.

They've got to get their hands on thousands of pages of Romney's tax filings so that the media can — as Romney says — lie about them. It will be interesting to see if Obama can pick the lock of the famously guarded IRS.

20120802-05	15:22	MarthaH	"Heavin Recovering Following Tractor Accident"
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Our blessing for several years has been to have this man as our physician. While he was educated as a chemical engineer at Rose-Hulman with honors, he later also graduated with honors from medical school and has been active as a popular, astute doctor, as dedicated to his patients as we are to him. This summer he has also been grandson Jake's employer. This is what happened Saturday night. A few years ago, he deemed a commuter flight to Mayo's for classes as too expensive and chose to drive himself up there; the flight he passed up then crashed in northern Indiana with no survivors. Now this new chapter and our second blessing, too. He is also a Parkinson's patient but keeps on serving his community that loves him dearly. He isn't much--and thankfully like too many of today's doctors. There are many lessons for all within the story.

Here's the news that spread fast in our community:

"Heavin Recovering Following Tractor Accident" by Jared Jernagan, *Greencastle Banner-Graphic*

Aug. 2, 2012, (<http://www.bannergraphic.com/story/1877402.html>)

(BAINBRIDGE, In.) Sixteen hours trapped under a tractor gives a man a lot of time to think and pray.

After all that time alone, Dr. Robert Heavin believes he experienced a miracle this weekend.

Heavin, 60, is the previously unidentified man rescued by Floyd Township and Danville firefighters on Sunday morning following a Saturday evening tractor accident on his rural Bainbridge farm.

Heavin was trapped beneath this tractor for nearly 16 hours on Saturday night.

How Heavin managed to avoid serious injury under an overturned tractor -- he suffered only two broken ribs and "a bunch of bruises" -- is next to impossible to explain.

"I take it to be a miracle," Heavin said. "I don't know how else to explain it, in terms of that."

Heavin contacted the *Banner Graphic* on Wednesday to recount his ordeal and thank those who prayed for him during his hospital stay.

It all started with some simple cleanup on Heavin's property at around 7:30 p.m. Saturday.

"I was moving a pile of rock that had been there for a while and I just picked up too heavy a load," Heavin said.

As he was moving the rocks, Heavin came over a small rise and began to pick up speed as he went down a hill. He quickly knew something was wrong, but could not shut the tractor down or lower the bucket fast enough.

"It just kept going faster and faster, like a demon possessed," Heavin said. "There were no brakes because the load was too heavy in the bucket. So I just shut the throttle down and started lowering the bucket, but it wouldn't go down fast enough.

"Then it dropped off into a little hole and I felt it start to turn over. I tried to get off of it. Unfortunately, when I got off of it, I got my foot caught and fell over."

The tractor kept turning over, but Heavin was fortunate to find himself in a place he would not be crushed.

"I was in the only place that I could be, in between the fender and the loader arm," Heavin said. "When it inverted itself totally over, my head came into a little hole in the ground and the steering wheel was on top of my head and across my neck. I was pinned there. I couldn't move."

Although his head and neck were pinned, Heavin said he was fortunate with their exact placement -- his head was between two spokes of the wheel, and the rim of the wheel was across his neck -- but he could still breathe.

He was able to dig some of the rock from around his head with a Leatherman knife but could not free himself.

At that point, all that was left was to wait and pray.

"Me and my Good Lord had a good, long talk," Heavin said.

As a man who lives alone except for a couple of dogs, Heavin could not expect anyone to come looking for him terribly soon. He said one of the animals stayed with him and even tried to get help a couple of times.

"I told her to go get help," Heavin said. "Actually, around 3 a.m. she went over and got all the dogs in the neighborhood barking. My neighbor actually came out on the porch and looked, but he couldn't see me from where he was at."

The same thing happened again at 5 a.m., unfortunately with the same result.

As Heavin continued to wait under the tractor, things were complicated when the hydraulics in the power steering failed. This meant the wheel tried to settle, with the steering knob continuing to turn back toward his neck.

"I was getting tired of trying to hold the knob off of my neck," he said.

As dawn broke, the situation began looking worse.

"The tractor settled again around daybreak and got a little bit closer. I thought, 'This is gonna be it,'" Heavin said. "I just kept praying. I felt like if God was going to do me in, at least not to torture me too long."

A visit from Heavin's son Kyle in late morning set the rescue in motion.

"Around 10 o'clock or so, little white lights showed up and I thought, 'Well I'm hallucinating, getting heat exhaustion.' Then I heard a four-wheeler but it went the other direction."

Heavin assumed it was the sound of his neighbor feeding his hogs.

"My son came over to get some fire wood. He knew I didn't make it to early church," Heavin said. "He came in the house and saw the crockpot was still on. The cell phone was on the four-wheeler, unfortunately."

Knowing something was wrong, Kyle searched the property. When he found the overturned tractor with his father underneath, he thought the worst.

"He kind of went ballistic when he found me. With my legs sticking out there, he thought I was dead," the elder Heavin said. "I couldn't talk very loud, so I had to wait for him to kind of quit screaming before I could tell him I was OK."

The authorities were soon alerted, with both fire departments, as well as Operation Life and St. Vincent Stat Flight responding to the scene.

"My sons came over there and they helped hold the steering wheel out of my neck for the 45 minutes it took to get the tractor raised up," Heavin said. "I only needed about two or three inches to get my head out. I had it dug out but I just couldn't quite make it all the way. Plus, I was getting pretty weak and tired at that point."

Somehow, his most serious injuries were the broken ribs, sustained when the loader arm poked him in the side.

The longtime Putnam County Hospital physician lobbied his rescuers to take him to those familiar walls, but he was overruled.

"I tried to get them to take me to Greencastle, but they said the helicopter doesn't take you to critical access hospitals," Heavin said.

Upon arrival at St. Vincent in Indianapolis, he found familiar caretakers anyway.

"It turned out that the doctor I normally use up at St. Vincent was the one on call that day. Actually, a nurse I had worked with at Greencastle was working in the ER too, so I felt in good hands," he said.

With minimal injuries considering the circumstances, Heavin was out of the hospital as of Wednesday morning, staying with one of his sons in Greencastle.

"I think I'm gonna make it," he said. "I just really want to thank everybody for their prayers and concern. I truly appreciate that."

Perhaps as an aid to the recovery process, Heavin was even able to find a bit of humor in certain details of his ordeal.

"It was an interesting experience, I guess," the doctor said with a chuckle. "I was a little claustrophobic but I don't think I'm claustrophobic anymore."

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20120802-07	17:57	SteveB	"Libelous Big Lies About Liberals"
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"Libelous Big Lies About Liberals" by Thomas Magstadt, NationofChange

Aug. 2, 2012, (<http://www.nationofchange.org/libelous-big-lies-about-liberals-1343913686>)

Democrats have allowed the Republican Party to brand liberals and liberalism as a radical ideology rather than a mainstream alternative to the extreme right-wing ideology that now passes for conservatism in this country.

The Republican definition of what it means to be a liberal is false and fictitious but has now become so infused into the political vernacular and fixed in the public mind that simply setting the record state requires a Herculean effort.

As a first step, here is a short list of big lies about liberals.

Big Lie #1: Liberals are all alike – tree hugging clones who agree about everything from abortion and arms control to Zolof and Zoroastrianism.

No, in fact that would be the new Republicans – the folks who watch FOX News religiously, follow the party line like lemmings, and are not in the least troubled by the tawdry methods that FOX uses to distort the words and views of those it opposes.

One of the reasons why liberals are so astonishingly ineffectual at hammering home specific messages is precisely because, unlike today's knee-jerk conservatives, liberals do not march in lockstep on much of anything, including the burning issues of the day.

Unlike the Rush Limbaugh, Sean Hannity, and Bill O'Reilly, liberals tend to treat people of all hues and views with respect. That respect, however, is put to the extreme test when we are constantly bombarded with toxic untruths extolling the trickle down theory (purporting to show how the extreme concentration of wealth in society benefits us all) or the dickish idea that greed is good – dickish as in Dick Cheney, Dick Arme, and Dick Tuck.

Big Lie #2: Liberals and progressives are wannabe European socialists (and as all "real Americans" know in their bones, that's a bad thing).

Here's Dick Arme speaking to the National Press Club in 2010: "Jamestown colony, when it was first founded as a socialist venture, dang near failed with everybody dead and dying in the snow."

As though that bit of historical buffoonery wasn't enough, he continued, "The small-government conservative movement, which includes people who call themselves the tea party patriots and so forth, is about the principles of liberty as embodied in the Constitution, the understanding of which is fleshed out if you read things like the Federalist Papers."

And then came the zinger: Democrats and other "people here who do not cherish America the way we do," he explained, "did not read the Federalist Papers." The publication Arme referenced (but apparently hasn't actually read) is, of course, the collection of papers forever associated with James Madison and Alexander Hamilton. Hamilton was an ardent advocate of a strong central government – the very antithesis of Arme's wondrous "small-government conservative movement". Anyone who reads and understands the Federalist Papers, or knows anything at all about the controversy among the Founders over this fundamental question, cannot fail to see the absurdity in this Dick's version of reality.

To confuse liberalism with socialism is to prove conclusively that a) you have no idea what socialism is, b) you know nothing about the long and venerable tradition of liberal and progressive political thought in America, c) you have absolutely no regard for the truth, or d) all of the above.

Moreover, it's an insult to the vast majority of voters whose everyday values (for example, fairness, honesty, and civility) are far more closely aligned with those of liberals and progressives than with ultra-conservative apologists for the plutocracy. Paul Ryan, Scott Walker, and, above all, Walter Mitt Romney, have come to personify wealth and privilege – the 1% - in the mind of most middle-class Americans. (If you happen to be betting the farm on a Republican victory in November, you ought to be pushing the panic button about now.)

Big Lie #3: Liberals and progressives are anti-business and don't understand basic economics, including the role of competitive markets in promoting prosperity and creating the world's most technologically advanced societies.

That's dead wrong. In fact, 20th century conservatives are deeply indebted to 19th century liberals. By contrast, today's so-called conservatives lie not only about liberals but also about markets and about the relationship between government and a functioning market economy. They incessantly sing the praises of the "free market" and condemn all manner of "state regulation" – the red tape, rules, and oversight that supposedly strangle business and stifle initiative.

They inveigh against subsidies and government handouts aimed at helping the needy (or ever-so-slightly leveling the playing field), but they demand (and get) special tax breaks for the rich, subsidies for oil companies, and bailouts for banks too big to fail, not to mention insurance giants (think AIG), auto manufacturers, et cetera. These are but a few of the more egregious examples of the fiscal hypocrisy stalking the corridors of Capitol Hill and the suites of Corporate America.

The truth is that there is no free market, never has been, never will be. All markets are regulated, shaped in a political mold of rules, privileges, and protections. It's not the rules that make markets dysfunctional; it's the privileges and protections that distort the natural forces of supply and demand. In other words, it's big business that gets in its own way by recognizing no limits and observing no self-restraint in the pursuit of plunder, prey, and profit. How else to explain the mysteries of the New Derivative Economy, the ascendancy of a feral company called Wal-Mart (ranked #1 on *Fortune's* Global 500), or the baneful business model of "venture capitalists" and commercial vultures like Bain Capital?

Liberals understand that without vigorous competition markets can't work their magic. Competition, not domination, is the key to efficiency and innovation. When conservatives talk about "creative destruction" it's a ruse; what they are saying is the best way to compete is to kill off the competition – precisely what Marx meant when he observed that modern capitalists (the "bourgeoisie") produce their own gravediggers. The proper role of the state in a market economy is not to protect producers but to insure competitiveness. Republicans once embraced this principle. Liberals still do.

Big Lie #4: Liberals don't care about deficits; they want to redistribute money from the most productive members of society (the rich) to the least productive (loafers and laggards) who love living on "welfare"; liberals are in favor of "handouts" and "giveaways" and throwing good money after bad.

This is one of the most invidious charges the far right levels at liberals. Talk about hypocrisy! Remember the guy who declared back in 2002 that Ronald Reagan proved "deficits don't matter"? That was Dick Cheney. And speaking of Reagan, the national debt grew by 189% during President Reagan's two terms in office (1980-1988). Under Reagan's Democratic predecessor, Jimmy Carter, the national debt did not exceed 35% of GDP; at the end of Reagan's tenure in the White House it was 52.6% (advancing at an average annual rate of 23.6%).

During the Clinton presidency (1992-2000), annual deficits were reduced (to a manageable 4.4% per year on average) and something approximating a balanced budget was actually achieved during Bill Clinton's tumultuous second term. When George W. Bush succeeded Clinton, the federal deficits rose sharply and the national debt ballooned to 74% of GDP.

True, it has risen to 95% of GDP under President Obama. But the attack dogs for the Republican Party conveniently fail to mention that federal deficits since 9-11 were (and are) tied to defense spending and, since the 2008 Wall Street meltdown, to the multibillion dollar bank bail-out. Big defense budgets and big bank bailouts are both Republican causes. Not a penny of the national debt can be blamed on the new Patient Protection and Affordable Health Care Act, which is phased in and doesn't really take effect (with health care exchanges) until 2014.

Meanwhile, the federal government, with zealous support from Republicans, continues to outspend the rest of the world on military weaponry and self-defeating wars. By the narrowest measure (excluding many items that are clearly related to national security) the US accounts for some 43% of total global defense spending. Including intelligence, nuclear energy, and the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan (treated as "supplemental funding" until 2010 and thus, in defiance of all logic, not reflected in annual military spending prior to that time), the US spends more than the rest of the world combined.

Similarly, the big Bush and Obama stimulus packages went primarily to big banks and corporations, not the middle class. These big "giveaways" – combined with the tax cuts for the rich – were (and are) subsidies (or "tax expenditures") that primarily benefit those least in need of federal assistance. To use the term Republicans throw around so loosely, it is socialism for the super rich.

Big Lie #5: Conservatives are patriotic and love this country more than the dovish liberals who have proven time and again that they lack the courage, vigilance, and resolve to meet and defeat the enemies of freedom and democracy.

Pure rubbish. Guess what socio-economic strata ("social classes" to use the time-honored term) have produced the foot soldiers for America's wars in the post-Vietnam era? Clue: the peak of the income pyramid is not the correct answer.

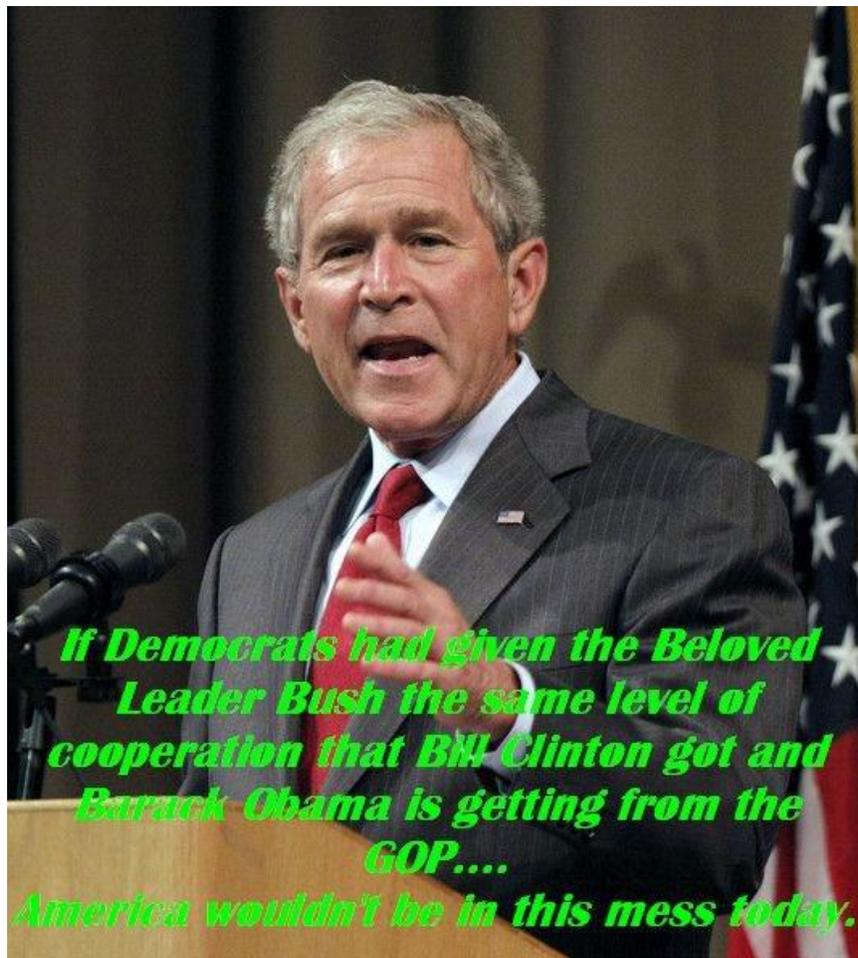
Nor have the children of upper income families in general been well represented among the ranks of the enlisted men and women. And you'd be hard-pressed to find offspring of members of the US Congress in the enlisted ranks. And be it noted that neither Willard Mitt Romney nor any of his five sons has ever served a single day in the U.S. military.

Military service means different things to different social classes. For the sons and daughters of legacy families and the *nouveau riche*, it likely means attendance at one the elite military academies – an all-expenses paid undergraduate education and a gold brick road to becoming an officer. Officers in the U.S. armed forces are paid on a different scale than enlisted soldiers ("privates") and receive generous benefits that continue even after they are no longer on active duty.

It's true that many military officers equate patriotism with Fox News, the Republican Party, monogamy, and regular church-attendance, but troops in the "trenches" are a different story altogether. They mostly come from the ranks of the lower middle classes and minorities – the rising socio-ethnic rainbow that overwhelmingly supports the Democratic Party.

It's no surprise the liars who have taken over the Republic Party would say things about liberals that aren't true. The surprise is that the leaders of the Democratic Party have not done more to expose these lies – in effect, allowing the vilest politicians to discredit liberalism, malign liberals, and misrepresent what it means to be a responsible citizen in a society that values honesty, decency, fairness, and, above all, the healing power of truth.

(Tom Magstadt earned his Ph.D. at The Johns Hopkins University School of International Studies. He is the author of *An Empire If You Can Keep It: Power and Principle in American Foreign Policy*, *Understanding Politics: Ideas, Institutions and Issues*, and *Nations and Governments: Comparative Politics in Regional Perspective*. He was a regular contributor to the Prague Post in 1998-99 and has published widely in newspapers, magazines and journals in the United States. He was a Fulbright Scholar in the Czech Republic in the mid-1990s and a visiting professor at the Air War College in 1990-92. He has taught at several universities, chaired two political science departments, and also did a stint as an intelligence analyst at the CIA. He is a member of the board of the International Relations Council of Kansas City. Now working mainly as a free-lance writer, he lives in Westwood Hills, Kansas.)



*If Democrats had given the Beloved
Leader Bush the same level of
cooperation that Bill Clinton got and
Barack Obama is getting from the
GOP....*

America wouldn't be in this mess today.

Why men shouldn't write advice columns

Dear John,

I hope you can help me. The other day, I set off for work, leaving my husband in the house watching TV. My car stalled, and then it broke down about a mile down the road, and I had to walk back to get my husband's help. When I got home, I couldn't believe my eyes. He was in our bedroom with the neighbor's daughter!

I am 32, my husband is 34 and the neighbor's daughter is 19. We have been married for 10 years. When I confronted him, he broke down and admitted they had been having an affair for the past six months. He won't go to counseling, and I'm afraid I am a wreck and need advice urgently. Can you please help?

Sincerely, Sheila

Dear Sheila,

A car stalling after being driven a short distance can be caused by a variety of faults with the engine. Start by checking that there is no debris in the fuel line. If it is clear, check the vacuum pipes and hoses on the intake manifold and also check all grounding wires. If none of these approaches solves the problem, it could be that the fuel pump itself is faulty, causing low delivery pressure to the injectors.

I hope this helps,

John

— Forwarded by Steve Sanderson,
Gilbert, S.C.



<http://www.blackhillsbadlands.com/home/thingstodo/outdoorrecreation/summerfun/rockclimbing>



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

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FRIENDS OF THE MIDDLE NEWSLETTER #197 — AUG. 6, 2012

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INDEX: Click here.

We Are Killing My Beloved Seas

(posted by Steven W. Baker / SteveB, Aug. 6, 2012)

"We cannot walk in the ocean, or hike there, or camp there, or from its depths sit and contemplate our situation and nature's. All we can do is stand on its shores and watch, or swim or surf its edges, or boat and float across its surface. The oceans are not us. We lack fins, we lack gills. We are not naturally invested in our oceans and their riches, which are such potentially lucrative assets for those who want to profit off them -- and destroy them in the process."



"Walking the Waters" by Subhankar Banerjee, Tom Dispatch/NationofChange

Aug. 3, 2012, (<http://www.nationofchange.org/walking-waters-1344001121>)

When you go to the mountains, you go to the mountains. When it's the desert, it's the desert. When it's the ocean, though, we generally say that we're going "to the beach." Land is our element, not the waters of our world, and that is an unmistakable advantage for any oil company that wants to drill in pristine waters.

Take Shell Oil. Recently, the company's drill ship, the fabulously named Noble Discoverer, went adrift and almost grounded in Dutch Harbor, Alaska. That should be considered an omen for a distinctly star-crossed venture to come. Unfortunately, few of us are paying the slightest attention.

Shell is getting ready to drill for oil in the Arctic Ocean, an ecosystem staggeringly rich in life of every sort, and while it's not yet quite a done deal, the prospect should certainly focus our minds. But first, it's worth reminding ourselves of the mind-boggling richness of the life still in our oceans.

Last month began with a once-in-a-lifetime sighting in Monterey Bay, California, startlingly close to shore, of blue whales. Those gigantic mammals can measure up to 100 feet, head-to-tail, and weigh nearly 200 tons -- the largest animal by weight ever to have lived on this planet. Yes, even heavier than dinosaurs. The biggest of them, *Amphicoelias fragillimus*, is estimated to have weighed 122 tons, while the largest blue whale came in at a whopping 195 tons.

The recent Monterey Bay sighting is being called "the most phenomenal showing of the endangered mammals in recent history." On July 5th alone, the Monterey Bay Whale Watch reported sightings of "12 blue whales, 40 humpback whales, 400 Risso's dolphins, 300 northern right whale dolphins, 250 Pacific white-sided dolphins, and two minke whales."

"Everywhere you go you just see blows" -- that is, the blues spouting -- Nancy Black, owner of Monterey Bay Whale Watch, told the *Santa Cruz Sentinel*. It seems that the abundance of krill, the tiny shrimp-like creatures that the whales feed on, attracted about 100 of the blues. Until the beginning of the twentieth century, they were abundant with an estimated population of more than 200,000 living in the Southern (or Antarctic) Ocean alone. Then they were hunted nearly to extinction. Today, only about 10,000 of them are believed to exist.

If you follow the Pacific coastline from Monterey all the way north, sooner or later you'll arrive at Kivalina along the Chukchi Sea coast in the Alaskan Arctic. Keep going along that coastline even further north and you'll pass by Point Hope, Point Lay, Wainright, and finally Barrow -- the northernmost town in the United States.

At Barrow, you'll be at the confluence of the Chukchi and Beaufort Seas of the Arctic Ocean. Now, head east along the Beaufort Sea coast to Nuiqsut, and Kaktovik, both Iñupiat communities. The Chukchi and Beaufort Seas are remarkably rich in krill, and home to the endangered bowhead whale. It may not be quite as large as the blue, but head-to-tail it can still measure an impressive enough 66 feet and weigh up to 75 tons, and it has one special attribute. It is believed to be the longest-lived mammal on the planet.

Like blues, bowheads were also abundant -- an estimated population of 30,000 well into the mid-nineteenth century. Then commercial whalers began hunting them big time, driving them nearly extinct in less than 50 years. Today, about 10,000 bowhead whales live in the Arctic Ocean. Blues and bowheads could be considered the elders of the sea.

While the blues were feeding in Monterey Bay, Shell's drill ships, the Noble Discoverer and the Kulluk, were migrating north, with the hope of drilling for oil in those very waters this summer. Unlike the jubilant tourists, scientists, and residents of the California coast, the Iñupiat people of the Arctic coast are now living in fear of Shell's impending arrival; and little wonder, as that oil giant is about to engage in what may be the most dangerous form of drilling anywhere on Earth. After all, no one actually knows how to clean up an oil spill that happens under the ice in the harsh conditions of the Arctic Ocean. Despite that, the Obama administration has been fast-tracking Shell's dangerous drilling plan, while paying remarkably little attention to the ecological fears it raises and the potential devastation a major spill or spills would cause to the native peoples of the north.

No need to worry, though: Shell swears it's dealing with the possibility of such a disaster, even to the point of bringing in dogs "to detect oil spills beneath snow and ice." No joke. "When it comes to drilling for oil in the harsh and unpredictable Arctic," the *Guardian* reported in March, "Shell has gone to the dogs, it seems. A dachshund and two border collies to be specific."

The Obama administration has been no less reassuring. There will be a genuine federal inspector on board those drill ships 24/7. And whether you're listening to the oil company or our government, you should just know that it's

all a beautiful dream, nothing more. When a spill happens, and it's minus 35 degrees Fahrenheit, and the wind's howling at 65 miles per hour, and sea ice is all around you and moving, the idea that a highly trained dachshund or federal inspector will be able to do a thing is pure fantasy. Believe me, I've been there under those conditions and if the worst occurs, this won't be a repeat of BP in the Gulf of Mexico (bad as that was). Help will not be available.

Hand Shell this for honesty: the company has admitted that, if a spill were to happen late in the summer drilling season (of course it won't!), they will simply have to leave the spilled oil "in place" for nine months to do its damndest. The following summer they will theoretically deal with what's left of the spill, and -- though they don't say this -- the possibility of a dead or dying sea.

The U.S. National Environmental Policy Act requires that the government must do an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) if there is reason to believe that a proposed activity will significantly affect the quality of the human environment. The Department of Interior's Bureau of Ocean Energy Management, Regulation, and Enforcement avoided the time consuming EIS process, however, issuing instead what is called a "Finding of No Significant Impact."

In late June, Interior Secretary Ken Salazar said, "I believe there will not be an oil spill" from Shell's Arctic drilling, and proceeded full speed ahead. Know this: in 2011 alone in the Niger Delta of Nigeria, Shell reported 63 "operational spills" due to equipment failure. That happened in a tropical environment.

Oil companies must have an approved spill-response plan before drilling can proceed. But Shell's government-rubber-stamped plan turns out to be full of holes, including the claim that, should a spill occur, they will be able to recover 90% of all spilled oil. (In the cases of both the *Exxon Valdez* and the *Deepwater Horizon* disasters less than 10% was recovered.) In fact, it's a claim from which the company is already backtracking. On July 10th, 10 environmental organizations, including the Alaska Wilderness League, the Center for Biological Diversity, and Resisting Environmental Destruction on Indigenous Lands (REDOIL), filed a lawsuit challenging Shell's spill-response plans in an attempt to stop this summer's drilling.

In addition, Shell's 37-year-old 294-foot barge, the Arctic Challenger, a necessity for its clean-up plan, is still awaiting final certification from the U.S. Coast Guard. Reporting on the failure to receive it so far, the *Los Angeles Times* pointed out that engineers from the oil company say it's no longer appropriate to require them to meet the rigorous weather standards originally proposed." Unfortunately, there couldn't be anything more basic to drilling in the Arctic than its fearsome weather. If you can't hack that -- and no oil company can -- you shouldn't be sending your drill ships northward.

And a massive spill or a series of smaller ones is hardly the only danger to one of the more fragile environments left on the planet. The seismic testing that precedes any drilling and the actual drilling operations bring "lots of noise" to the region. This could be very harmful to the bowhead whales, which use sound to navigate through sea ice in darkness. Seismic testing represents, as Peter Matthiessen wrote in 2007, following a trip we took together along the Arctic coast of Alaska, "the most severe acoustic insult to the marine environment I can imagine short of naval warfare."

In addition, Shell's drill ships will put significant amounts of toxic substances into the Arctic air each year, including an estimated 336 tons of nitrogen oxides and up to 28 tons of PM2.5 -- fine particles that include dust, dirt, soot, smoke, and liquid droplets. These are harmful to human health and will degrade the Arctic's clean atmosphere.

Despite opposition from indigenous Iñupiat communities, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) nonetheless approved air quality permits for the ships in January. On June 28th, however, Shell admitted that the Noble Discoverer "cannot meet the [EPA's] requirements for emissions of nitrogen oxide and ammonia" and asked the agency to loosen air quality rules for Arctic drilling.

Add to this one more thing: even before Shell's drilling begins, or there can be any assessment of it, the Obama administration is already planning to open up more Arctic waters to offshore drilling in the years to come. Think of this -- and of the possible large-scale, irremediable pollution of the Arctic's watery landscape -- as the canary in the coal mine when it comes to the oceans of the world. Especially now, when global warming is melting northern ice

and opening the way for energy corporations backed by governments to train their sights on those waters and their energy riches.

Here's the simplest fact: we are killing our oceans. Rapidly. Already, the massive atmospheric accumulation of greenhouse gases from the burning of non-Arctic fossil fuels has, scientists believe, caused a rise in sea surface temperature of 1 degree Centigrade over the past 140 years. This may not seem impressive, but much of this increase has occurred during the past few decades. As a result, scientists again believe, there has been a potentially catastrophic 40% decline, largely since 1950, in the phytoplankton that support the whole marine food chain. Headlines from media reports on this decline catch the grim possibilities in the situation: "The Dead Sea," "Are Our Oceans Dying?"

In addition, the oceans absorb about 25% of the carbon dioxide (CO₂) we put in the atmosphere and this has made their waters abnormally acidic, transforming coral reefs into graveyards. Earlier this year, we learned that "the current acidification is potentially unparalleled in at least the last 300 million years of Earth history, and raises the possibility that we are entering an unknown territory of marine ecosystem change." This July, Jane Lubchenco, chief of the U.S. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, referred to such ocean acidification as climate change's "equally evil twin."

Similarly, the rapid melting of sea ice in the Arctic Ocean is already proving catastrophic for a host of species, including narwhals, polar bears, walrus, seals, and sea birds. And you have undoubtedly heard about the massive expanses of garbage, especially plastic, now clotting our oceans. Chris Jordan's powerful photographs of dead albatrosses at Midway Atoll, their bellies full of plastic, catch what this can mean for marine life. And then there's the increasing industrial overfishing of all waters, which is threatening to decimate fish populations globally.

And keep in mind, that's only so far. Drilling for what Michael Klare calls "tough oil" or "extreme energy" in a range of perilous locations only ensures the further degradation of the oceans. In addition to the possible opening up of the Arctic Ocean, there has been an expansion of deepwater drilling in the Gulf of Mexico, offshore drilling in "Iceberg Alley" near Newfoundland, deep-offshore drilling in the Brazilian "pre-salt" fields of the Atlantic Ocean, and an increase in offshore drilling in West Africa and Asia.

As Klare writes in his new book, *The Race for What's Left*, "Drilling for oil and natural gas in the deep waters of the Gulf of Mexico, the Atlantic, and the Pacific is likely to accelerate in the years ahead... Even the ecological damage wreaked by the *Deepwater Horizon* disaster of April 2010 is not likely to slow this drive." He adds that "the giant oil companies will spend an estimated \$387 billion on offshore drilling operations between 2010 and 2014."

In other words, we're in a drill, baby, drill world, even when it comes to the most perilous of watery environments, and if the major energy companies have their way, there will be no turning back until the oceans are, essentially, a garbage dump.

Of his epic photographic series *Seascapes*, artist Hiroshi Sugimoto wrote, "Can someone today view a scene just as primitive man might have?... Although the land is forever changing its form, the sea, I thought, is immutable."

All his seascapes are black-and-white with equal part sky and sea -- and in them the oceans do indeed look pristine and immutable. If you stand on the shore of any ocean today, the waters may still look that way to you. Unfortunately, we now know that those waters are increasingly anything but.

Seeing blue whales breaching and feeding is indeed a thrill and does breed an urge for protection and conservation, but what we see on the surface of the planet's oceans is only a minuscule fraction of all their life. It is possible that we know more about outer space than we do about what actually lives in the depths of those waters. And that catches something of the conundrum facing us as they are exploited and polluted past some tipping point: How do we talk about protecting what we can't even see?

Despite inadequacies, faults, and failures, the conservation movement to protect public lands in the U.S. has been something of a triumph, providing enjoyment for us and crucially needed habitat for many species with whom we share this Earth. Any of us, paying little or nothing, can enjoy public lands of various sizes, shapes, and varieties:

national parks, national forests, officially designated wilderness areas, national wildlife refuges, state parks, city parks.

The success of land conservation, I'd suggest, was founded on one simple idea -- walking. Henry David Thoreau's famous essay "Walking" began as a lecture he gave at the Concord Lyceum on April 23, 1851, and was published in 1862 after his death in the *Atlantic Monthly*. Environmentalist John Muir made the connection between walking and land conservation explicit through his unforgettably lyrical prose about hiking the mountains of California.

Later, novelist Edward Abbey showed us how to walk in the desert, and also gave us a recipe for "monkey wrenching" -- forms of sabotage to protest environmental destruction and in defense of conservation that is alive and well today. There have been so many others who have written about walking on, and in, the land: Mary Austin, Margaret Murie, David Abram, William deBuys, Rebecca Solnit, and Terry Tempest Williams, among others. But this simplest of free and democratic ideas that helped make public lands familiar and inspired their conservation against industrial destruction falls away completely when we enter the oceanic realm.

We cannot walk in the ocean, or hike there, or camp there, or from its depths sit and contemplate our situation and nature's. All we can do is stand on its shores and watch, or swim or surf its edges, or boat and float across its surface. The oceans are not us. We lack fins, we lack gills. We are not naturally invested in our oceans and their riches, which are such potentially lucrative assets for those who want to profit off them -- and destroy them in the process.

Nonetheless, for their conservation, somehow we need to learn to walk those waters. It's not enough to have the necessary set of grim facts, figures, and information about how they are being endangered. We need a philosophy, an "ocean ethics" akin to the "land ethics" that environmentalist Aldo Leopold wrote about in his seminal book *A Sand County Almanac*. We don't have it yet, but a good place to start would be with the idea of "interconnectedness."

It's a very old idea, as German poet-philosopher Johann Wolfgang von Goethe once said, "The truth was known already, long ago." Rachel Carson, for instance, gave meaning to interconnectedness on land in her famed book *Silent Spring*, published in 1962, by linking the fate of bird species to the rise of industrial toxins. She symbolically linked the potential extinction of species like that national symbol the Bald Eagle, whose numbers had plummeted from an estimated 50,000 breeding pairs in the lower 48 states to about 400 in the early 1960s, to our own sense of well- or ill-being. The time has come to connect in a similar way the fate of marine life with the rise of offshore drilling, climate change, ocean acidification, plastic pollution, and industrial overfishing.

As I can attest from my decade-long engagement with the far north, the Arctic is no longer the remote place disconnected from our daily lives that we imagine. In fact, I often think about it as the most connected place on Earth.

The tiny semipalmated sandpipers, a shorebird I can see along East Coast beaches any fall, is the same species I saw nesting each summer along the Beaufort Sea coast, near where Shell plans to drill. Hundreds of millions of birds migrate to the Arctic from every corner of the planet annually to rear their young -- a celebration of interconnectedness. But so do industrial toxins migrate to the Arctic from every region of the world, making humans and animals in some parts of the far north among the most contaminated inhabitants of the planet -- a tragedy of interconnectedness.

What happens there will also affect us in frightening ways. The rapid disintegration and melting of Arctic icebergs, glaciers, and sea ice is projected to raise global sea levels, threatening coastal cities across the northern hemisphere. And the melting of the Arctic permafrost and of frozen areas of the seafloor is likely to release huge amounts of methane (about 20 times more potent than CO2 as a greenhouse gas) that could prove potentially catastrophic for the planet. This is why the time has come to focus on oceanic interconnectedness -- if we hope to save our oceans and the planet as we have known it.

For more than a century, environmental organizations have focused on lobbying Congress as a (if not *the*) primary strategy for supporting land conservation against industrial destruction. But in the age of *Citizens United*, Big Oil and King Coal will certainly outspend the lobbying efforts of these organizations by orders of magnitude. In

addition, when it comes to the oceans, Congress plays a minor role, at least so far. Most of the crucial decisions go through the executive branch.

Instead of harshly criticizing Obama's offshore drilling policy, green groups have generally appealed to his good environmental sense and instincts -- a strategy that has not worked. This attitude is changing however. In May in a letter published in the *New York Times*, David Yarnold, president of the National Audubon Society, wrote: "Imagine: a president who ignores the advice of his own scientists on a key environmental issue, dredging for votes in an election year. Sound familiar? The administration is ignoring warnings from the Coast Guard, the United States Geological Survey, the Government Accountability Office, and hundreds of scientists. All say the [oil] industry is not prepared to drill safely in Arctic waters. Their nightmare scenario: a BP-like blowout in an ice-locked sea."

Litigation has been the next best option. Iñupiat activists and green groups have, in recent years, filed numerous lawsuits meant to impede or stop Shell's drilling plans. Some were won, others lost, but the plans to drill remain ongoing.

Monkey wrenching is the last resort. Greenpeace has been leading the charge on that with creativity and passion in their Save the Arctic campaign (<http://www.savethearctic.org/>). Above all, though, if we are to protect our oceans, the public must be engaged. If our children and grandchildren are to experience the excitement of seeing blue whales breach and feed, we better get busy. After all, Shell is adrift in Arctic waters. It's time to bring them back to shore.

20120804-09	17:53	SteveB	"Chomsky: The Most Powerful Country in History Is Destroying the Earth & Human Rights as We Know Them"
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"Chomsky: The Most Powerful Country in History Is Destroying the Earth and Human Rights as We Know Them" by Noam Chomsky, Tom Dispatch/AlterNet

July 30, 2012, (<http://www.alternet.org/world/chomsky-most-powerful-country-history-destroying-earth-and-human-rights-we-know-them>)

Down the road only a few generations, the millennium of Magna Carta, one of the great events in the establishment of civil and human rights, will arrive. Whether it will be celebrated, mourned, or ignored is not at all clear.

That should be a matter of serious immediate concern. What we do right now, or fail to do, will determine what kind of world will greet that event. It is not an attractive prospect if present tendencies persist -- not least, because the Great Charter is being shredded before our eyes.

The first scholarly edition of Magna Carta was published by the eminent jurist William Blackstone. It was not an easy task. There was no good text available. As he wrote, "the body of the charter has been unfortunately gnawed by rats" -- a comment that carries grim symbolism today, as we take up the task the rats left unfinished.

Blackstone's edition actually includes two charters. It was entitled The Great Charter and the Charter of the Forest. The first, the Charter of Liberties, is widely recognized to be the foundation of the fundamental rights of the English-speaking peoples -- or as Winston Churchill put it more expansively, "the charter of every self-respecting man at any time in any land." Churchill was referring specifically to the reaffirmation of the Charter by Parliament in the Petition of Right, imploring King Charles to recognize that the law is sovereign, not the King. Charles agreed briefly, but soon violated his pledge, setting the stage for the murderous Civil War.

After a bitter conflict between King and Parliament, the power of royalty in the person of Charles II was restored. In defeat, Magna Carta was not forgotten. One of the leaders of Parliament, Henry Vane, was beheaded. On the scaffold, he tried to read a speech denouncing the sentence as a violation of Magna Carta, but was drowned out by trumpets to ensure that such scandalous words would not be heard by the cheering crowds. His major crime had been to draft a petition calling the people "the original of all just power" in civil society -- not the King, not even God. That was the position that had been strongly advocated by Roger Williams, the founder of the first free

society in what is now the state of Rhode Island. His heretical views influenced Milton and Locke, though Williams went much farther, founding the modern doctrine of separation of church and state, still much contested even in the liberal democracies.

As often is the case, apparent defeat nevertheless carried the struggle for freedom and rights forward. Shortly after Vane's execution, King Charles granted a Royal Charter to the Rhode Island plantations, declaring that "the form of government is Democratical," and furthermore that the government could affirm freedom of conscience for Papists, atheists, Jews, Turks -- even Quakers, one of the most feared and brutalized of the many sects that were appearing in those turbulent days. All of this was astonishing in the climate of the times.

A few years later, the Charter of Liberties was enriched by the Habeas Corpus Act of 1679, formally entitled "an Act for the better securing the liberty of the subject, and for prevention of imprisonment beyond the seas." The U.S. Constitution, borrowing from English common law, affirms that "the writ of habeas corpus shall not be suspended" except in case of rebellion or invasion. In a unanimous decision, the U.S. Supreme Court held that the rights guaranteed by this Act were "[c]onsidered by the Founders [of the American Republic] as the highest safeguard of liberty." All of these words should resonate today.

The Second Charter and the Commons

The significance of the companion charter, the Charter of the Forest, is no less profound and perhaps even more pertinent today -- as explored in depth by Peter Linebaugh in his richly documented and stimulating history of Magna Carta and its later trajectory. The Charter of the Forest demanded protection of the commons from external power. The commons were the source of sustenance for the general population: their fuel, their food, their construction materials, whatever was essential for life. The forest was no primitive wilderness. It had been carefully developed over generations, maintained in common, its riches available to all, and preserved for future generations -- practices found today primarily in traditional societies that are under threat throughout the world.

The Charter of the Forest imposed limits to privatization. The Robin Hood myths capture the essence of its concerns (and it is not too surprising that the popular TV series of the 1950s, "The Adventures of Robin Hood," was written anonymously by Hollywood screenwriters blacklisted for leftist convictions). By the seventeenth century, however, this Charter had fallen victim to the rise of the commodity economy and capitalist practice and morality.

With the commons no longer protected for cooperative nurturing and use, the rights of the common people were restricted to what could not be privatized, a category that continues to shrink to virtual invisibility. In Bolivia, the attempt to privatize water was, in the end, beaten back by an uprising that brought the indigenous majority to power for the first time in history. The World Bank has just ruled that the mining multinational Pacific Rim can proceed with a case against El Salvador for trying to preserve lands and communities from highly destructive gold mining. Environmental constraints threaten to deprive the company of future profits, a crime that can be punished under the rules of the investor-rights regime mislabeled as "free trade." And this is only a tiny sample of struggles underway over much of the world, some involving extreme violence, as in the Eastern Congo, where millions have been killed in recent years to ensure an ample supply of minerals for cell phones and other uses, and of course ample profits.

The rise of capitalist practice and morality brought with it a radical revision of how the commons are treated, and also of how they are conceived. The prevailing view today is captured by Garrett Hardin's influential argument that "freedom in a commons brings ruin to us all," the famous "tragedy of the commons": what is not owned will be destroyed by individual avarice.

An international counterpart was the concept of terra nullius, employed to justify the expulsion of indigenous populations in the settler-colonial societies of the Anglosphere, or their "extermination," as the founding fathers of the American Republic described what they were doing, sometimes with remorse, after the fact. According to this useful doctrine, the Indians had no property rights since they were just wanderers in an untamed wilderness. And the hard-working colonists could create value where there was none by turning that same wilderness to commercial use.

In reality, the colonists knew better and there were elaborate procedures of purchase and ratification by crown and parliament, later annulled by force when the evil creatures resisted extermination. The doctrine is often attributed to John Locke, but that is dubious. As a colonial administrator, he understood what was happening, and there is no basis for the attribution in his writings, as contemporary scholarship has shown convincingly, notably the work of the Australian scholar Paul Corcoran. (It was in Australia, in fact, that the doctrine has been most brutally employed.)

The grim forecasts of the tragedy of the commons are not without challenge. The late Elinor Ostrom won the Nobel Prize in economics in 2009 for her work showing the superiority of user-managed fish stocks, pastures, woods, lakes, and groundwater basins. But the conventional doctrine has force if we accept its unstated premise: that humans are blindly driven by what American workers, at the dawn of the industrial revolution, bitterly called "the New Spirit of the Age, Gain Wealth forgetting all but Self."

Like peasants and workers in England before them, American workers denounced this New Spirit, which was being imposed upon them, regarding it as demeaning and destructive, an assault on the very nature of free men and women. And I stress women; among those most active and vocal in condemning the destruction of the rights and dignity of free people by the capitalist industrial system were the "factory girls," young women from the farms. They, too, were driven into the regime of supervised and controlled wage labor, which was regarded at the time as different from chattel slavery only in that it was temporary. That stand was considered so natural that it became a slogan of the Republican Party, and a banner under which northern workers carried arms during the American Civil War.

Controlling the Desire for Democracy

That was 150 years ago -- in England earlier. Huge efforts have been devoted since to inculcating the New Spirit of the Age. Major industries are devoted to the task: public relations, advertising, marketing generally, all of which add up to a very large component of the Gross Domestic Product. They are dedicated to what the great political economist Thorstein Veblen called "fabricating wants." In the words of business leaders themselves, the task is to direct people to "the superficial things" of life, like "fashionable consumption." That way people can be atomized, separated from one another, seeking personal gain alone, diverted from dangerous efforts to think for themselves and challenge authority.

The process of shaping opinion, attitudes, and perceptions was termed the "engineering of consent" by one of the founders of the modern public relations industry, Edward Bernays. He was a respected Wilson-Roosevelt-Kennedy progressive, much like his contemporary, journalist Walter Lippmann, the most prominent public intellectual of twentieth century America, who praised "the manufacture of consent" as a "new art" in the practice of democracy.

Both recognized that the public must be "put in its place," marginalized and controlled -- for their own interests of course. They were too "stupid and ignorant" to be allowed to run their own affairs. That task was to be left to the "intelligent minority," who must be protected from "the trampling and the roar of [the] bewildered herd," the "ignorant and meddlesome outsiders" -- the "rascal multitude" as they were termed by their seventeenth century predecessors. The role of the general population was to be "spectators," not "participants in action," in a properly functioning democratic society.

And the spectators must not be allowed to see too much. President Obama has set new standards in safeguarding this principle. He has, in fact, punished more whistleblowers than all previous presidents combined, a real achievement for an administration that came to office promising transparency. WikiLeaks is only the most famous case, with British cooperation.

Among the many topics that are not the business of the bewildered herd is foreign affairs. Anyone who has studied declassified secret documents will have discovered that, to a large extent, their classification was meant to protect public officials from public scrutiny. Domestically, the rabble should not hear the advice given by the courts to major corporations: that they should devote some highly visible efforts to good works, so that an "aroused public" will not discover the enormous benefits provided to them by the nanny state. More generally the U.S. public should not learn that "state policies are overwhelmingly regressive, thus reinforcing and expanding social inequality," though designed in ways that lead "people to think that the government helps only the undeserving poor, allowing

politicians to mobilize and exploit anti-government rhetoric and values even as they continue to funnel support to their better-off constituents" -- I'm quoting from the main establishment journal, *Foreign Affairs*, not from some radical rag.

Over time, as societies became freer and the resort to state violence more constrained, the urge to devise sophisticated methods of control of attitudes and opinion has only grown. It is natural that the immense PR industry should have been created in the most free of societies, the United States and Great Britain. The first modern propaganda agency was the British Ministry of Information a century ago, which secretly defined its task as "to direct the thought of most of the world" -- primarily progressive American intellectuals, who had to be mobilized to come to the aid of Britain during World War I.

Its U.S. counterpart, the Committee on Public Information, was formed by Woodrow Wilson to drive a pacifist population to violent hatred of all things German -- with remarkable success. American commercial advertising deeply impressed others. Goebbels admired it and adapted it to Nazi propaganda, all too successfully. The Bolshevik leaders tried as well, but their efforts were clumsy and ineffective.

A primary domestic task has always been "to keep [the public] from our throats," as essayist Ralph Waldo Emerson described the concerns of political leaders when the threat of democracy was becoming harder to suppress in the mid-nineteenth century. More recently, the activism of the 1960s elicited elite concerns about "excessive democracy," and calls for measures to impose "more moderation" in democracy.

One particular concern was to introduce better controls over the institutions "responsible for the indoctrination of the young": the schools, the universities, the churches, which were seen as failing that essential task. I'm quoting reactions from the left-liberal end of the mainstream spectrum, the liberal internationalists who later staffed the Carter administration, and their counterparts in other industrial societies. The right wing was much harsher. One of many manifestations of this urge has been the sharp rise in college tuition, not on economic grounds, as is easily shown. The device does, however, trap and control young people by debt, often for the rest of their lives, thus contributing to more effective indoctrination.

The Three-Fifths People

Pursuing these important topics further, we see that the destruction of the Charter of the Forest, and its obliteration from memory, relates rather closely to the continuing efforts to constrain the promise of the Charter of Liberties. The "New Spirit of the Age" cannot tolerate the pre-capitalist conception of the Forest as the shared endowment of the community at large, cared for communally for its own use and for future generations, protected from privatization, from transfer to the hands of private power for service to wealth, not needs. Inculcating the New Spirit is an essential prerequisite for achieving this end, and for preventing the Charter of Liberties from being misused to enable free citizens to determine their own fate.

Popular struggles to bring about a freer and more just society have been resisted by violence and repression, and massive efforts to control opinion and attitudes. Over time, however, they have met with considerable success, even though there is a long way to go and there is often regression. Right now, in fact.

The most famous part of the Charter of Liberties is Article 39, which declares that "no free man" shall be punished in any way, "nor will We proceed against or prosecute him, except by the lawful judgment of his peers and by the law of the land."

Through many years of struggle, the principle has come to hold more broadly. The U.S. Constitution provides that no "person [shall] be deprived of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law [and] a speedy and public trial" by peers. The basic principle is "presumption of innocence" -- what legal historians describe as "the seed of contemporary Anglo-American freedom," referring to Article 39; and with the Nuremberg Tribunal in mind, a "particularly American brand of legalism: punishment only for those who could be proved to be guilty through a fair trial with a panoply of procedural protections" -- even if their guilt for some of the worst crimes in history is not in doubt.

The founders of course did not intend the term "person" to apply to all persons. Native Americans were not persons. Their rights were virtually nil. Women were scarcely persons. Wives were understood to be "covered" under the civil identity of their husbands in much the same way as children were subject to their parents. Blackstone's principles held that "the very being or legal existence of the woman is suspended during the marriage, or at least is incorporated and consolidated into that of the husband: under whose wing, protection, and cover, she performs everything." Women are thus the property of their fathers or husbands. These principles remain up to very recent years. Until a Supreme Court decision of 1975, women did not even have a legal right to serve on juries. They were not peers. Just two weeks ago, Republican opposition blocked the Fairness Paycheck Act guaranteeing women equal pay for equal work. And it goes far beyond.

Slaves, of course, were not persons. They were in fact three-fifths human under the Constitution, so as to grant their owners greater voting power. Protection of slavery was no slight concern to the founders: it was one factor leading to the American revolution. In the 1772 Somerset case, Lord Mansfield determined that slavery is so "odious" that it cannot be tolerated in England, though it continued in British possessions for many years. American slave-owners could see the handwriting on the wall if the colonies remained under British rule. And it should be recalled that the slave states, including Virginia, had the greatest power and influence in the colonies. One can easily appreciate Dr. Johnson's famous quip that "we hear the loudest yelps for liberty among the drivers of negroes."

Post-Civil War amendments extended the concept person to African-Americans, ending slavery. In theory, at least. After about a decade of relative freedom, a condition akin to slavery was reintroduced by a North-South compact permitting the effective criminalization of black life. A black male standing on a street corner could be arrested for vagrancy, or for attempted rape if accused of looking at a white woman the wrong way. And once imprisoned he had few chances of ever escaping the system of "slavery by another name," the term used by then-Wall Street Journal bureau chief Douglas Blackmon in an arresting study.

This new version of the "peculiar institution" provided much of the basis for the American industrial revolution, with a perfect work force for the steel industry and mining, along with agricultural production in the famous chain gangs: docile, obedient, no strikes, and no need for employers even to sustain their workers, an improvement over slavery. The system lasted in large measure until World War II, when free labor was needed for war production.

The postwar boom offered employment. A black man could get a job in a unionized auto plant, earn a decent salary, buy a house, and maybe send his children to college. That lasted for about 20 years, until the 1970s, when the economy was radically redesigned on newly dominant neoliberal principles, with rapid growth of financialization and the offshoring of production. The black population, now largely superfluous, has been recriminalized.

Until Ronald Reagan's presidency, incarceration in the U.S. was within the spectrum of industrial societies. By now it is far beyond others. It targets primarily black males, increasingly also black women and Hispanics, largely guilty of victimless crimes under the fraudulent "drug wars." Meanwhile, the wealth of African-American families has been virtually obliterated by the latest financial crisis, in no small measure thanks to criminal behavior of financial institutions, with impunity for the perpetrators, now richer than ever.

Looking over the history of African-Americans from the first arrival of slaves almost 500 years ago to the present, they have enjoyed the status of authentic persons for only a few decades. There is a long way to go to realize the promise of Magna Carta.

Sacred Persons and Undone Process

The post-Civil War fourteenth amendment granted the rights of persons to former slaves, though mostly in theory. At the same time, it created a new category of persons with rights: corporations. In fact, almost all the cases brought to the courts under the fourteenth amendment had to do with corporate rights, and by a century ago, they had determined that these collectivist legal fictions, established and sustained by state power, had the full rights of persons of flesh and blood; in fact, far greater rights, thanks to their scale, immortality, and protections of limited liability. Their rights by now far transcend those of mere humans. Under the "free trade agreements," Pacific Rim can, for example, sue El Salvador for seeking to protect the environment; individuals cannot do the same. General

Motors can claim national rights in Mexico. There is no need to dwell on what would happen if a Mexican demanded national rights in the United States.

Domestically, recent Supreme Court rulings greatly enhance the already enormous political power of corporations and the super-rich, striking further blows against the tottering relics of functioning political democracy.

Meanwhile Magna Carta is under more direct assault. Recall the Habeas Corpus Act of 1679, which barred "imprisonment beyond the seas," and certainly the far more vicious procedure of imprisonment abroad for the purpose of torture -- what is now more politely called "rendition," as when Tony Blair rendered Libyan dissident Abdel Hakim Belhaj, now a leader of the rebellion, to the mercies of Qaddafi; or when U.S. authorities deported Canadian citizen Maher Arar to his native Syria, for imprisonment and torture, only later conceding that there was never any case against him. And many others, often through Shannon Airport, leading to courageous protests in Ireland.

The concept of due process has been extended under the Obama administration's international assassination campaign in a way that renders this core element of the Charter of Liberties (and the Constitution) null and void. The Justice Department explained that the constitutional guarantee of due process, tracing to Magna Carta, is now satisfied by internal deliberations in the executive branch alone. The constitutional lawyer in the White House agreed. King John might have nodded with satisfaction.

The issue arose after the presidentially ordered assassination-by-drone of Anwar al-Awlaki, accused of inciting jihad in speech, writing, and unspecified actions. A headline in the *New York Times* captured the general elite reaction when he was murdered in a drone attack, along with the usual collateral damage. It read: "The West celebrates a cleric's death." Some eyebrows were lifted, however, because he was an American citizen, which raised questions about due process -- considered irrelevant when non-citizens are murdered at the whim of the chief executive. And irrelevant for citizens, too, under Obama administration due-process legal innovations.

Presumption of innocence has also been given a new and useful interpretation. As the *New York Times* reported, "Mr. Obama embraced a disputed method for counting civilian casualties that did little to box him in. It in effect counts all military-age males in a strike zone as combatants, according to several administration officials, unless there is explicit intelligence posthumously proving them innocent." So post-assassination determination of innocence maintains the sacred principle of presumption of innocence.

It would be ungracious to recall the Geneva Conventions, the foundation of modern humanitarian law: they bar "the carrying out of executions without previous judgment pronounced by a regularly constituted court, affording all the judicial guarantees which are recognized as indispensable by civilized peoples."

The most famous recent case of executive assassination was Osama bin Laden, murdered after he was apprehended by 79 Navy seals, defenseless, accompanied only by his wife, his body reportedly dumped at sea without autopsy. Whatever one thinks of him, he was a suspect and nothing more than that. Even the FBI agreed.

Celebration in this case was overwhelming, but there were a few questions raised about the bland rejection of the principle of presumption of innocence, particularly when trial was hardly impossible. These were met with harsh condemnations. The most interesting was by a respected left-liberal political commentator, Matthew Yglesias, who explained that "one of the main functions of the international institutional order is precisely to legitimate the use of deadly military force by western powers," so it is "amazingly naïve" to suggest that the U.S. should obey international law or other conditions that we righteously demand of the weak.

Only tactical objections can be raised to aggression, assassination, cyberwar, or other actions that the Holy State undertakes in the service of mankind. If the traditional victims see matters somewhat differently, that merely reveals their moral and intellectual backwardness. And the occasional Western critic who fails to comprehend these fundamental truths can be dismissed as "silly," Yglesias explains -- incidentally, referring specifically to me, and I cheerfully confess my guilt.

[Executive Terrorist Lists](#)

Perhaps the most striking assault on the foundations of traditional liberties is a little-known case brought to the Supreme Court by the Obama administration, *Holder v. Humanitarian Law Project*. The Project was condemned for providing "material assistance" to the guerrilla organization PKK, which has fought for Kurdish rights in Turkey for many years and is listed as a terrorist group by the state executive. The "material assistance" was legal advice. The wording of the ruling would appear to apply quite broadly, for example, to discussions and research inquiry, even advice to the PKK to keep to nonviolent means. Again, there was a marginal fringe of criticism, but even those accepted the legitimacy of the state terrorist list -- arbitrary decisions by the executive, with no recourse.

The record of the terrorist list is of some interest. For example, in 1988 the Reagan administration declared Nelson Mandela's African National Congress to be one of the world's "more notorious terrorist groups," so that Reagan could continue his support for the Apartheid regime and its murderous depredations in South Africa and in neighboring countries, as part of his "war on terror." Twenty years later Mandela was finally removed from the terrorist list, and can now travel to the U.S. without a special waiver.

Another interesting case is Saddam Hussein, removed from the terrorist list in 1982 so that the Reagan administration could provide him with support for his invasion of Iran. The support continued well after the war ended. In 1989, President Bush I even invited Iraqi nuclear engineers to the U.S. for advanced training in weapons production -- more information that must be kept from the eyes of the "ignorant and meddling outsiders."

One of the ugliest examples of the use of the terrorist list has to do with the tortured people of Somalia. Immediately after September 11th, the United States closed down the Somali charitable network Al-Barakaat on grounds that it was financing terror. This achievement was hailed one of the great successes of the "war on terror." In contrast, Washington's withdrawal of its charges as without merit a year later aroused little notice.

Al-Barakaat was responsible for about half the \$500 million in remittances to Somalia, "more than it earns from any other economic sector and 10 times the amount of foreign aid [Somalia] receives" a U.N. review determined. The charity also ran major businesses in Somalia, all destroyed. The leading academic scholar of Bush's "financial war on terror," Ibrahim Warde, concludes that apart from devastating the economy, this frivolous attack on a very fragile society "may have played a role in the rise... of Islamic fundamentalists," another familiar consequence of the "war on terror."

The very idea that the state should have the authority to make such judgments is a serious offense against the Charter of Liberties, as is the fact that it is considered uncontentious. If the Charter's fall from grace continues on the path of the past few years, the future of rights and liberties looks dim.

Who Will Have the Last Laugh?

A few final words on the fate of the Charter of the Forest. Its goal was to protect the source of sustenance for the population, the commons, from external power -- in the early days, royalty; over the years, enclosures and other forms of privatization by predatory corporations and the state authorities who cooperate with them, have only accelerated and are properly rewarded. The damage is very broad.

If we listen to voices from the South today we can learn that "the conversion of public goods into private property through the privatization of our otherwise commonly held natural environment is one way neoliberal institutions remove the fragile threads that hold African nations together. Politics today has been reduced to a lucrative venture where one looks out mainly for returns on investment rather than on what one can contribute to rebuild highly degraded environments, communities, and a nation. This is one of the benefits that structural adjustment programmes inflicted on the continent -- the enthronement of corruption." I'm quoting Nigerian poet and activist Nnimmo Bassey, chair of Friends of the Earth International, in his searing expose of the ravaging of Africa's wealth, *To Cook a Continent*, the latest phase of the Western torture of Africa.

Torture that has always been planned at the highest level, it should be recognized. At the end of World War II, the U.S. held a position of unprecedented global power. Not surprisingly, careful and sophisticated plans were developed about how to organize the world. Each region was assigned its "function" by State Department planners, headed by the distinguished diplomat George Kennan. He determined that the U.S. had no special interest in Africa, so it should be handed over to Europe to "exploit" -- his word -- for its reconstruction. In the light of history,

one might have imagined a different relation between Europe and Africa, but there is no indication that that was ever considered.

More recently, the U.S. has recognized that it, too, must join the game of exploiting Africa, along with new entries like China, which is busily at work compiling one of the worst records in destruction of the environment and oppression of the hapless victims.

It should be unnecessary to dwell on the extreme dangers posed by one central element of the predatory obsessions that are producing calamities all over the world: the reliance on fossil fuels, which courts global disaster, perhaps in the not-too-distant future. Details may be debated, but there is little serious doubt that the problems are serious, if not awesome, and that the longer we delay in addressing them, the more awful will be the legacy left to generations to come. There are some efforts to face reality, but they are far too minimal. The recent Rio+20 Conference opened with meager aspirations and derisory outcomes.

Meanwhile, power concentrations are charging in the opposite direction, led by the richest and most powerful country in world history. Congressional Republicans are dismantling the limited environmental protections initiated by Richard Nixon, who would be something of a dangerous radical in today's political scene. The major business lobbies openly announce their propaganda campaigns to convince the public that there is no need for undue concern -- with some effect, as polls show.

The media cooperate by not even reporting the increasingly dire forecasts of international agencies and even the U.S. Department of Energy. The standard presentation is a debate between alarmists and skeptics: on one side virtually all qualified scientists, on the other a few holdouts. Not part of the debate are a very large number of experts, including the climate change program at MIT among others, who criticize the scientific consensus because it is too conservative and cautious, arguing that the truth when it comes to climate change is far more dire. Not surprisingly, the public is confused.

In his State of the Union speech in January, President Obama hailed the bright prospects of a century of energy self-sufficiency, thanks to new technologies that permit extraction of hydrocarbons from Canadian tar sands, shale, and other previously inaccessible sources. Others agree. *The Financial Times* forecasts a century of energy independence for the U.S. The report does mention the destructive local impact of the new methods. Unasked in these optimistic forecasts is the question what kind of a world will survive the rapacious onslaught.

In the lead in confronting the crisis throughout the world are indigenous communities, those who have always upheld the Charter of the Forests. The strongest stand has been taken by the one country they govern, Bolivia, the poorest country in South America and for centuries a victim of western destruction of the rich resources of one of the most advanced of the developed societies in the hemisphere, pre-Columbus.

After the ignominious collapse of the Copenhagen global climate change summit in 2009, Bolivia organized a People's Summit with 35,000 participants from 140 countries -- not just representatives of governments, but also civil society and activists. It produced a People's Agreement, which called for very sharp reduction in emissions, and a Universal Declaration on the Rights of Mother Earth. That is a key demand of indigenous communities all over the world. It is ridiculed by sophisticated westerners, but unless we can acquire some of their sensibility, they are likely to have the last laugh -- a laugh of grim despair.

20120805-14	14:06	Art	"Climate Change Is Here — And Worse Than We Thought"
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To me there are two significant issues that we all should be focusing on for the next election.

One is climate change, which may not kill us but will quite likely kill our children and almost certainly all our grandchildren. Many still disagree, but I encourage you to read the article below from the Sunday Washington Post. James Hensen, noted expert in Atmospheric Physics, is the author. Additionally I read today the Koch brothers favorite counter scientists, heavily financed by the Kochs, has now come out and said he was wrong and that fossil fuel carbons in the atmosphere are causing global warming at an alarming rate.

Two is the deficit. The very short apolitical clip at the bottom lays it all out very nicely. Although I think it may be unduly pessimistic, it helps us all understand the magnitude of the problem and maybe that is a start to coming up with what must be done next.

"Climate Change Is Here — And Worse Than We Thought" by James E. Hansen, *The Washington Post*

Aug. 3, 2012 (http://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/climate-change-is-here--and-worse-than-we-thought/2012/08/03/6ae604c2-dd90-11e1-8e43-4a3c4375504a_story.html)

When I testified before the Senate in the hot summer of 1988, I warned of the kind of future that climate change would bring to us and our planet. I painted a grim picture of the consequences of steadily increasing temperatures, driven by mankind's use of fossil fuels.

But I have a confession to make: I was too optimistic.

My projections about increasing global temperature have been proved true. But I failed to fully explore how quickly that average rise would drive an increase in extreme weather.

In a new analysis of the past six decades of global temperatures, which will be published Monday, my colleagues and I have revealed a stunning increase in the frequency of extremely hot summers, with deeply troubling ramifications for not only our future but also for our present.

This is not a climate model or a prediction but actual observations of weather events and temperatures that have happened. Our analysis shows that it is no longer enough to say that global warming will increase the likelihood of extreme weather and to repeat the caveat that no individual weather event can be directly linked to climate change. To the contrary, our analysis shows that, for the extreme hot weather of the recent past, there is virtually no explanation other than climate change.

The deadly European heat wave of 2003, the fiery Russian heat wave of 2010 and catastrophic droughts in Texas and Oklahoma last year can each be attributed to climate change. And once the data are gathered in a few weeks' time, it's likely that the same will be true for the extremely hot summer the United States is suffering through right now.

These weather events are not simply an example of what climate change could bring. They are caused by climate change. The odds that natural variability created these extremes are minuscule, vanishingly small. To count on those odds would be like quitting your job and playing the lottery every morning to pay the bills.

Twenty-four years ago, I introduced the concept of "climate dice" to help distinguish the long-term trend of climate change from the natural variability of day-to-day weather. Some summers are hot, some cool. Some winters brutal, some mild. That's natural variability.

But as the climate warms, natural variability is altered, too. In a normal climate without global warming, two sides of the die would represent cooler-than-normal weather, two sides would be normal weather, and two sides would be warmer-than-normal weather. Rolling the die again and again, or season after season, you would get an equal variation of weather over time.

But loading the die with a warming climate changes the odds. You end up with only one side cooler than normal, one side average, and four sides warmer than normal. Even with climate change, you will occasionally see cooler-than-normal summers or a typically cold winter. Don't let that fool you.

Our new peer-reviewed study, published by the National Academy of Sciences, makes clear that while average global temperature has been steadily rising due to a warming climate (up about 1.5 degrees Fahrenheit in the past century), the extremes are actually becoming much more frequent and more intense worldwide.

When we plotted the world's changing temperatures on a bell curve, the extremes of unusually cool and, even more, the extremes of unusually hot are being altered so they are becoming both more common and more severe.

The change is so dramatic that one face of the die must now represent extreme weather to illustrate the greater frequency of extremely hot weather events.

Such events used to be exceedingly rare. Extremely hot temperatures covered about 0.1 percent to 0.2 percent of the globe in the base period of our study, from 1951 to 1980. In the last three decades, while the average temperature has slowly risen, the extremes have soared and now cover about 10 percent of the globe.

This is the world we have changed, and now we have to live in it — the world that caused the 2003 heat wave in Europe that killed more than 50,000 people and the 2011 drought in Texas that caused more than \$5 billion in damage. Such events, our data show, will become even more frequent and more severe.

There is still time to act and avoid a worsening climate, but we are wasting precious time. We can solve the challenge of climate change with a gradually rising fee on carbon collected from fossil-fuel companies, with 100 percent of the money rebated to all legal residents on a per capita basis. This would stimulate innovations and create a robust clean-energy economy with millions of new jobs. It is a simple, honest and effective solution.

The future is now. And it is hot.

(James E. Hansen directs the NASA Goddard Institute for Space Studies.)

[20120803-01](#) 08:04 SteveB Disclosure

Why are Republicans all for disclosure when it comes to Birth Certificates, but so shy about Tax Returns???

Isn't it the latter which tell us more about the way a man lives???

Just askin'.

[20120803-06](#) 14:56 Pam Re: Disclosure (reply to SteveB, above)

VERY good question!

[20120803-02](#) 09:54 SteveB "Debt, Depression, DeMarco"

"Debt, Depression, DeMarco" by Paul Krugman, *The New York Times*

Aug. 2, 2012, (<http://www.nytimes.com/2012/08/03/opinion/krugman-debt-depression-demarco.html>)

There has been plenty to criticize about President Obama's handling of the economy. Yet the overriding story of the past few years is not Mr. Obama's mistakes but the scorched-earth opposition of Republicans, who have done everything they can to get in his way — and who now, having blocked the president's policies, hope to win the White House by claiming that his policies have failed.

And this week's shocking refusal to implement debt relief by the acting director of the Federal Housing Finance Agency — a Bush-era holdover the president hasn't been able to replace — illustrates perfectly what's going on.

Some background: many economists believe that the overhang of excess household debt, a legacy of the bubble years, is the biggest factor holding back economic recovery. Loosely speaking, excess debt has created a situation in which everyone is trying to spend less than their income. Since this is collectively impossible — my spending is your income, and your spending is my income — the result is a persistently depressed economy.

How should policy respond? One answer is government spending to support the economy while the private sector repairs its balance sheets; now is not the time for austerity, and cuts in government purchases have been a major economic drag. Another answer is aggressive monetary policy, which is why the Federal Reserve's refusal to act in the face of high unemployment and below-target inflation is a scandal.

But fiscal and monetary policy could, and should, be coupled with debt relief. Reducing the burden on Americans in financial trouble would mean more jobs and improved opportunities for everyone.

Unfortunately, the administration's initial debt relief efforts were ineffectual: Officials imposed so many restrictions to avoid giving relief to "undeserving" debtors that the program went nowhere. More recently, however, the administration has gotten a lot more serious about the issue.

And the obvious place to provide debt relief is on mortgages owned by Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac, the government-sponsored lenders that were effectively nationalized in the waning days of the George W. Bush administration.

The idea of using Fannie and Freddie has bipartisan support. Indeed, Columbia's Glenn Hubbard, a top Romney adviser, has called on Fannie and Freddie to let homeowners with little or no equity refinance their mortgages, which could sharply cut their interest payments and provide a major boost to the economy. The Obama administration supports this idea and has also proposed a special program of relief for deeply troubled borrowers.

But Edward DeMarco, the acting director of the agency that oversees Fannie and Freddie, refuses to move on refinancing. And, this week, he rejected the administration's relief plan.

Who is Ed DeMarco? He's a civil servant who became acting director of the housing finance agency after the Bush-appointed director resigned in 2009. He is still there, in the fourth year of the Obama administration, because Senate Republicans have blocked attempts to install a permanent director. And he evidently just hates the idea of providing debt relief.

Mr. DeMarco's letter rejecting the relief plan made remarkably weak arguments. He claimed that the plan, while improving his agency's financial position thanks to subsidies from the Treasury Department, would be a net loss to taxpayers — a conclusion not supported by his own staff's analysis, which showed a net gain. And it's worth pointing out that many private lenders have offered the very kinds of principal reductions Mr. DeMarco rejects — even though these lenders, unlike the government, have no incentive to take into account the way debt relief would strengthen the economy.

The main point, however, is that Mr. DeMarco seems to misunderstand his job. He's supposed to run his agency and secure its finances — not make national economic policy. If the Treasury secretary, acting for the president, seeks to subsidize debt relief in a way that actually strengthens the finance agency, the agency's chief has no business blocking that policy. Doing so should be a firing offense.

Can Mr. DeMarco be fired right away? I've been seeing conflicting analyses on that point, although one thing is clear: President Obama, if re-elected, can, and should, replace him through a recess appointment. In fact, he should have done that years ago. As I said, Mr. Obama has made plenty of mistakes.

But the DeMarco affair nonetheless demonstrates, once again, the extent to which U.S. economic policy has been crippled by unyielding, irresponsible political opposition. If our economy is still deeply depressed, much — and I would say most — of the blame rests not with Mr. Obama but with the very people seeking to use that depressed economy for political advantage.



20120803-04 11:57 SteveM Re: "Could 2012 Be America's Last Presidential Election?" (reply to SteveB, FotM Newsletter #196)

Are you f*cking serious, Dummy? Your "work" proves it? My emails?

I just pass on other points of view that are different from your narrow, socialist view.

If you think you've proved them lies, then go to the authors' sites and dispute them publicly. Then your "work" will be recognize for the truly revolutionary inspirations that you think they are

20120803-05 14:24 SteveB Re: "Could 2012 Be America's Last Presidential Election?" (reply to SteveM, above)

You don't read the FotM Newsletter I send you every day????

<http://www.FriendsOfTheMiddle.org>

I've sent you the address before too.

There you'll see public proof refuting even many of your lying forwarded emails.

And I thought you knew what was happenin'.

Thanks for the many insults slung for no reason, old friend.

20120803-07 14:59 Pam Re: "Heavin Recovering Following Tractor Accident" (reply to MarthaH, FotM Newsletter #196)

What a horrifying experience!

20120803-08 14:59 Tom Movie: *Total Recall 2012*

<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt1386703/>

http://www.rottentomatoes.com/m/total_recall_2010/news/1925646/critics_consensus_total_recall_isnt_an_affair_to_remember/

If you're going to remake a modern classic, you'd better bring something new to the table. Unfortunately, critics say this new *Total Recall* is visually impressive, but it swaps out the existential anxiety and eccentric panache of Paul Verhoeven's 1990 film for an overabundance of action set-pieces. Suffering from disturbing dreams, Douglas Quaid (Colin Farrell) decides to visit ReKall, a company that implants memories of an exciting vacation. When the procedure goes awry, however, Quaid becomes the target of a manhunt, and teams up with a beautiful rebel agent (Jessica Biel) on a mission to destroy the ReKall Corporation. The pundits say *Total Recall*, while technically sound, could use some of the wit and vulnerability that Arnold Schwarzenegger brought to the original.

Original Film: http://www.rottentomatoes.com/m/total_recall/

[I loved the original. –SteveB]

20120805-11 12:26 Tom Movie: *Red Dawn* Re-Dux

The only angle I can think of is "The Mouse that Roared" syndrome ???

The "PC" police have successfully rewritten the "Foe" in this script to an in-tenable adversary! Red China & Soviet Mafia alliance, maybe! ;-)

"North Korea Invades America in Dumbest Movie Ever" by David Axe, *Wired*

Aug. 4, 2012, (<http://m.wired.com/dangerroom/2012/08/north-korea-invades-america/#more-88386>)

North Korean paratroopers descend on an American small town. U.S. military resistance collapses. Korean armored vehicles roll down the streets unopposed except for a band of heavily armed bros in hoodies.

No, these are not images from some teenage gamer's fever dream. They're scenes from the movie *Red Dawn*, a remake of the 1984 cult classic about a joint Cuban-Soviet invasion of the U.S. and the attractive young American insurgents — the Wolverines — who help defeat it. The revamped *Red Dawn*, starring Chris Hemsworth, a.k.a. Thor, blasts into theaters in November.

But don't expect it to linger very long. Where the 1984 original successfully played upon widespread public fears over a supposedly rising and belligerent Soviet Union, the remake expects viewers to take North Korea seriously as an existential threat. We're guessing the flick is going to get a lot of unintended laughs.

You see, the actual North Korea is a country of 24 million people with a GDP roughly equal to North Dakota's. It's an impoverished, even starving, prison state that lacks modern weaponry and any ability to deploy forces globally. If preview clips posted this weekend are any indication, the movie magically gifts North Korea with a huge fleet of long-range transport planes ... because it has to. Of course, how these planes get past the U.S. military's 3,000 jet fighters is anyone's guess.

The new *Red Dawn* has been sitting on the shelf for a couple years owing to financing troubles and at least one major revamp by screenwriters Carl Elsworth and Jeremy Passmore. As originally written, the relaunched *Red Dawn* was only slightly less silly. The bad guys were Chinese. And while China has no discernible intention of invading anyone, much less the U.S., Beijing at least commands a \$7.3-trillion economy and an increasingly modern, two-

million-man army. But it's bad business to portray one of the world's fastest growing film markets as brutal world conquerors, so the producers swapped in North Korea, a country no one counts on for ticket sales.

In any event, John Milius, the writer of the original *Red Dawn*, called the remake "a stupid thing to do." Although not formally associated with the new production, Milius was offered a chance to read the screenplay. "It's all about neat action scenes and has nothing to do with story," Milius griped. Coincidentally, Milius is credited (though not without controversy) with penning the backstory for the video game *Homefront*, a military adventure about — you guessed it — a North Korean invasion of the U.S.

20120803-09 17:33 SteveG Graphic: See? "You DIDN'T Build That"



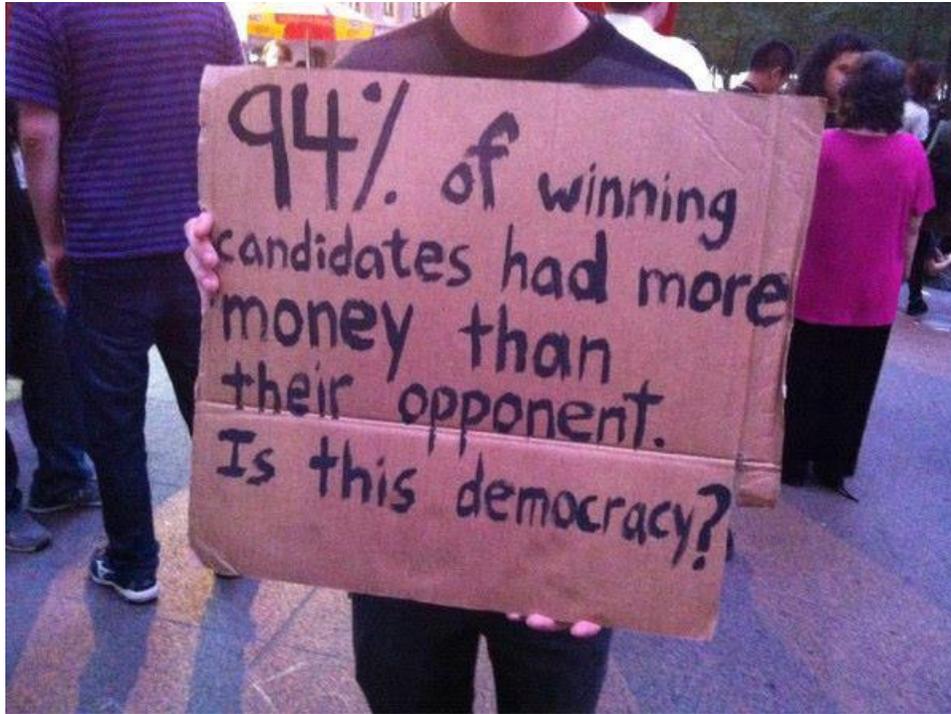
20120803-10 17:58 Art Re: Graphic: See? "You DIDN'T Build That" (reply to SteveG, above)

Good one. These A**holes are such loud mouth jerks. Open mouth, engage brain, later, if at all.

20120803-12 18:49 Art Re: Morocco (reply to Dennis, FotM Newsletter #188)

That is actually Mouley Idris in the background of your picture. And the caption is correct, it is near Volubilis. Mouley Idris was the first Arab city in Morocco and I guess they build it next to Volubilis to have easy access to mining stone. Why cut new stone when you had all this old stuff laying around.

I lived in Morocco for a year and speak Maghrebi Arabic.



This was provided by the Obama-Biden Campaign, still...

<http://www.barackobama.com/tax-calculator?source=HowMuchWouldYouPay-20120802-misc-HQB&icn=20120802-HowMuchWouldYouPay-misc-HQB>



"Rep. Walter Jones on Mitt Romney's Tax Returns: 'I Don't Think This Will Go Away'" by Luke Johnson, Huffington Post

Aug. 3, 2012, (http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/08/03/mitt-romney-tax-returns_n_1737260.html?utm_hp_ref=politics)

GOP Rep. Walter Jones (R-N.C.) said Thursday that Mitt Romney's refusal to release more than two years of tax returns could hurt him in the presidential election.

"I don't think this will go away," Jones told The Hill. "And if we're still talking about this in September, he's in deep trouble."

Many Republicans have called on Romney to release more than two years of tax returns to make the issue go away, including his former rivals Newt Gingrich, Rick Santorum, Rick Perry and Jon Huntsman. Conservative pundits Bill Kristol and George Will, as well as the editors of the National Review, have also called on Romney to release the returns.

Romney has steadfastly refused to do so.

Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid (D-Nev.) recently reignited the tax return issue, telling The Huffington Post in an interview that he heard from a Bain Capital investor that Romney hadn't paid any taxes for 10 years. Romney called on Reid Thursday to out his source, or in his words, "put up or shut up." Reid responded that it is Romney's "obligation to put up" and "release several years' worth of tax returns just like nominees of both parties have done for decades."

"Mitt R0mney: 'I Have Paid Taxes Every Year. A Lot of Taxes.'" by Jennifer Bendery, Huffington Post

Aug. 3, 2012, (http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/08/03/mitt-romney-taxes-paid_n_1738262.html?utm_hp_ref=politics&utm_hp_ref=politics)

(Presumptive Republican presidential nominee Mitt Romney pushed back, again, on Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid's claims that he hasn't paid taxes in a decade.)

(WASHINGTON) Mitt Romney insisted on Friday that he has paid taxes every year and repeated that Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid (D-Nev.) needs "to put up or shut up" with his accusations that he hasn't.

"Let me also say categorically: I have paid taxes every year. A lot of taxes. A lot of taxes," the presumptive GOP presidential nominee told reporters at a press availability after an event in Nevada.

"Harry Reid really has to put up or shut up, alright? So Harry, who are your sources?" Romney said, referring to Reid's claim that a Bain Capital investor told him Romney hadn't paid taxes in 10 years.

"And by the way Harry, I understand what you're trying to do. You're trying to deflect the fact that jobs numbers are bad, that Americans are out of work, and you're trying to throw anything up on the screen that will grab attention away from the fact that the policies of the White House haven't worked," Romney continued. "So Harry Reid is simply wrong."

Reid has been going after Romney all week over the candidate's failure to release his tax returns, a standard practice for presidential candidates. The Nevada Democrat sparked a firestorm when, earlier this week, he told The Huffington Post that he heard from a Bain Capital investor that Romney hadn't paid taxes for 10 years.

Romney spokesman Eric Fehrstrom said Reid's claims were untrue, and Romney himself said Thursday that Reid needs "to put up or shut up" and reveal his source at Bain Capital. Reid fired back that he got his information from "an extremely credible source" and pushed Romney, again, to just release his tax returns.

Pressed on Friday why he wouldn't just release his tax returns instead of engaging in a back-and-forth with Reid, Romney said people should visit his website to see his financial disclosure statements dating back to 2002 and his 2010 tax return.

"Go on the website, you'll be surprised to see the amazing amount of data that's associated with our campaign's disclosure," he said.

Earlier in the day, Reid launched another round of attacks on Romney, this time for "insulting" the American public by refusing to release his tax returns.

"It's hard to say which is more insulting to Americans' intelligence, Mitt Romney's tax plan or his refusal to show the American people what's in his tax returns," Reid said in a statement. "Romney seems to think he's above the basic level of transparency and openness that every presidential candidate has lived up to since his father set the standard in 1968."

"In short, Romney's message to Nevadans is this: He won't release his taxes, but he wants to raise yours."

Reid signaled Friday that he's not relenting in his attacks. He accused Romney of being "the most secretive presidential candidate since Richard Nixon" and pointed out that even nominees overseen by the Senate Finance Committee have to produce more tax returns that Romney is willing to release.

"Forget about president -- Mitt Romney couldn't get confirmed as a cabinet secretary," Reid said. "The contents of the one year of returns he has released would probably be enough to tank his nomination anyway: secret overseas bank accounts in Switzerland and the Cayman Islands, tax avoidance tricks and a lower tax rate than middle-class families pay."

20120804-10 18:00 SteveB "A Philosophical Question on Romney's Tax Returns"

"A Philosophical Question on Romney's Tax Returns" by Booman, Booman Tribune

Aug. 4, 2012, (<http://www.alternet.org/hot-news-views/philosophical-question-romneys-tax-returns>)

If a tree falls in the forest and Mitt Romney still hasn't released his tax returns, does it make a sound? **Is there any message at all that Romney can communicate until he stops the din of people braying for his tax returns?** The charge is "out there." For ten years, Mitt Romney paid nothing at all in taxes. If it isn't true, then Romney has the easiest slam-dunk in history. He can make Harry Reid look like either a gullible fool or a complete liar. **How could an honest Republican politician pass up such a golden opportunity to defend his honor while blasting the reputation of one of Washington's most powerful Democrats? What is in those tax returns that is so damaging to Romney's chances that he'd saddle himself with this controversy rather than humiliating his accusers?**

Pretty soon, Romney is going to announce his running mate. We'll chew that over for 72 hours or so, and then we'll go right back to asking Romney to release his tax returns. We'll want to know how many years of tax returns Romney saw from his running mate and why we can't see those, too. **Romney gave 23 years of tax returns to John McCain. And McCain chose Palin.**

No one is going to listen to Romney until he comes clean.

20120804-06 16:32 SteveB Vetting Mittens?

Dear Republicans,

Don't you folks vet your Republican candidates?

Maybe it's a good thing you haven't staged your Convention yet...

20120804-11 18:46 SteveM Re: Vetting Mittens? (reply to SteveB, above)

Clint Eastwood Endorses Romney's Presidential Bid: <http://floydreports.us1.list-manage.com/track/click?u=3668d6dcdf76634e54cc134ed&id=95f3bc7fad&e=fb50cf289a>.

Video: Romney: Let's Talk About Staples Vs. Solyndra: <http://floydreports.us1.list-manage1.com/track/click?u=3668d6dcdf76634e54cc134ed&id=7a5186c069&e=fb50cf289a>.

Video: Obama Tries to Disenfranchise Our Troops: <http://floydreports.us1.list-manage1.com/track/click?u=3668d6dcdf76634e54cc134ed&id=f09f51a5fd&e=fb50cf289a>.

Why Does Obama Support Our Enemies? <http://floydreports.us1.list-manage2.com/track/click?u=3668d6dcdf76634e54cc134ed&id=4b69181742&e=fb50cf289a>.

Video: Should Obama Go to Prison for Supporting Al-Qaeda? <http://floydreports.us1.list-manage2.com/track/click?u=3668d6dcdf76634e54cc134ed&id=fc4d1aca7d&e=fb50cf289a>.

[But...??? How is killing Osama bin Laden, etc. supporting Al-Qaeda??? –SteveB]

100 Ways Mitt Romney Is Just Like Barack Obama: <http://floydreports.us1.list-manage.com/track/click?u=3668d6dcdf76634e54cc134ed&id=6b07cf3a52&e=fb50cf289a>.

Obama Turns 51, Plays Golf: <http://floydreports.us1.list-manage2.com/track/click?u=3668d6dcdf76634e54cc134ed&id=4f023bc7b9&e=fb50cf289a>.

Oppressive Regulation Threatens Remaining U.S. Jobs: <http://floydreports.us1.list-manage.com/track/click?u=3668d6dcdf76634e54cc134ed&id=60738d0790&e=fb50cf289a>.

Why Romney Should NEVER Show More Tax Returns: <http://floydreports.us1.list-manage.com/track/click?u=3668d6dcdf76634e54cc134ed&id=01acb586ab&e=fb50cf289a>.

Obama Campaign Sues to Restrict Military Voting: <http://floydreports.us1.list-manage1.com/track/click?u=3668d6dcdf76634e54cc134ed&id=bb11f883d6&e=fb50cf289a>.

Jon Stewart Dings Dems Over Chick-fil-A: <http://floydreports.us1.list-manage1.com/track/click?u=3668d6dcdf76634e54cc134ed&id=ec79ea1b81&e=fb50cf289a>.

Kiss Day' Draws Smaller Response at Chick-Fil-A's Than Appreciation Day: <http://floydreports.us1.list-manage.com/track/click?u=3668d6dcdf76634e54cc134ed&id=eafbef2b04&e=fb50cf289a>.

Tennessee Democratic Party Disavows Senate Nominee: <http://floydreports.us1.list-manage1.com/track/click?u=3668d6dcdf76634e54cc134ed&id=fdcdda87c1&e=fb50cf289a>.

20120805-02 05:46 SteveB Re: Vetting Mittens? (reply to SteveM, above)
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Well, this is much better than your previous claims about Mr. Obama's birth certificate, etc., etc.

BUT, if this is what you Republicans call "vetting," then I can understand why you have a candidate with such a gaping hole in his story.

By the way, that darned Obama needs to be impeached! Imagine! Playing golf on his birthday! He should be so ashamed as to immediately deport himself back to Kenya!

I guess it's a good thing Democrats don't have to vet their candidate—they already know he's an alien, Islamic, communist child molester.

Here's just one little recent FACT about your cornfused candidate: He's been trying for weeks to hang the economy around the President's neck, spouting that Obama has failed to stimulate the economy (despite mainly being prevented from doing so by Republicans in the House, AS WE ALL KNOW!). Romney's "fix" seems to involve more of Bush's massive deficits and more wars—more of what got us here in the first place BEFORE OBAMA WAS ELECTED!. Yesterday, Romney told the Fed the country doesn't need more stimulus. You know, you can't have it both ways. To think you can is just plain STUPID! And LYING!

But, you know, Romney is completely right about one thing—the only people he seems to care about, the BILLIONAIRES, don't need any more stimulus. Unfortunately, most Americans (who would have to ride ON TOP of Romney's car) aren't doing as well as Romney's buddies.

"Romney also doubled down on his vow to create 12 million new jobs during his first term, calling that goal realistic and achievable." I guess he's planning on those being government jobs, huh? And he's going to create them himself, even though his party claims that the government can do nothing right, nothing to help the economy. Again, Romney wants to have it both ways—no matter how much the truth must be stretched.

Romney is a train wreck NOT waiting to happen—it happens almost every day! He's a bigger loser than McCain and Palin. Mark my words.

20120805-07 11:09 SteveM Re: Vetting Mittens? (reply to SteveB, above)
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I don't care where he was born. I'm concerned about where he lives now.

[Mmmm...before you seemed to care a lot about where he wasn't born. I got so many emails. –SteveB]

20120805-13 13:37 Art Re: Vetting Mittens? (reply to all, above)

I just read quickly through all these Vetting items provided by SteveM. I am sorry and no insults intended but these are some of the dumbest things I have ever read. Most are deliberately vague and the few that do try to name specifics are completely wrong. For instance just read the legal file on the advanced Ohio voting issue and find me one thing about the military in it. You can't because it isn't there. The issue is not the military being able to vote in advance but the fact that all others are forbidden to do so. The outcome will not affect the military voting in any way. What utter hogwash! Do any of these people bother to read the issue?

I am a retired Army Colonel, active duty, combat arms, two wars, wounded once and maybe one piece of shrapnel to many, so I think I may have a right to a bit of a say on TRICARE and defense spending. I use TRICARE and I have no problem with what is being proposed and I agree completely that we all have to contribute to address deficit spending. It is certainly correct that not all of my military cohorts agree with my position, but I do find it amusing that many, who are so vociferous, were actually REMFs, most never serving a day in a real combat action in their entire career. As for defense spending beyond the ridiculous fact that we spend as much as the rest of the world combined and 2/3 of them are out allies, I thought the Republican position was that government spending has nothing to do with the economy. So what's the issue, if you're concerned about the deficit?

Speaking of vetting, Rachael Maddow has done a superb job of looking at the Romney tax issue. I did not know that in 2002 while running for the governor of Massachusetts, he demand that his opponent, a female, have her husband release his tax returns, although he refused to do so himself. Think about that for a minute. When the husband initially balked, Romney asked "What is he trying to hide?" This is all captured on camera, so it is not someone's speculation, you can hear him say it. . Does this sound vaguely familiar? Yet now Romney is crying foul when Reid is saying the same thing about him. Hypocrisy at its finest.

Romney is clearly a pathological liar and I can only assume from his constant yes/no statements is counting strongly on the stupidity of the electorate. I for one find this insulting, beyond the fact that he apparently has nothing real to offer except "Trust me".

20120805-15 14:09 SteveG Re: Vetting Mittens? (reply to all, above)

Rachel does a good job of documenting her stories.

Your service to the country is exemplary and you are right about cutting spending..

Romney and the Republicans are a piece of work. Remember the swift boat ads against Kerry and the attack ads against McClelland in Georgia.

20120804-08 17:04 SteveB "How Mitt Romney Got Rich Destroying American Jobs & Promoting Sweatshop Capitalism"

"How Mitt Romney Got Rich Destroying American Jobs and Promoting Sweatshop Capitalism" by Paul Davidson, AlterNet

Aug. 1, 2012, (<http://www.alternet.org/economy/how-mitt-romney-got-rich-destroying-american-jobs-and-promoting-sweatshop-capitalism>)

Right now, a man whose predatory career has claimed the jobs of countless Americans is trying to wrap himself in the flag and call himself a "job creator" and "wealth creator."

Does he mean miserable jobs in Chinese factories? Wealth for the 1 percent? Apparently that's exactly what he means.

Republicans claim that Mitt Romney's entrepreneurial activities at Bain Capital have been good for Americans. The truth is that Romney has spent his career offshoring and outsourcing American production processes -- and associated jobs -- to countries like China where human labor is valued in the market at a very low wage rate.

Mitt Romney's tenure as Bain's CEO has long linked him to offshoring and outsourcing. Even today, although he is no longer in that position, Romney still makes a nice profit on undertakings done long after he left the day-to-day management of the firm.

The usual justifying claim is that offshoring and outsourcing are methods where the American entrepreneur finds the lowest labor cost of production for specific goods and services. Conservatives argue that even if there are additional shipping costs, the entrepreneur can provide goods and services at a lower price to American markets than if the product were produced at home. According to this line of thinking, American consumers are said to be winners because they can buy more for each of their dollars of income. (Never mind that those folks whose jobs were shipped overseas will not have much income to buy much of anything.)

In reality, there is nothing just in such practices. They run counter to American values and are detrimental to a decent society.

Bain's engagement in outsourcing under Romney's leadership can be traced back to at least 1993, when the firm bought into a company called Corporate Software Inc. CSI provided a range of services for hi-tech companies such as Microsoft. One service you'll be familiar with if you have ever had a computer glitch is the outsourcing of customer support, often through call centers. At first, CSI employed U.S. workers to provide these services, but by the mid-1990s CSI was establishing call centers in other countries.

Then CSI merged with another enterprise to form Stream International Inc. Stream immediately became active in the growing field of overseas calls centers. According to SEC reports filings, Bain was active in running Stream, providing "general executive and management services."

Bain has gone on with a host of additional offshoring activities since Romney left day-to-day operations. Romney's enormous wealth is partly derived from a golden handshake package he received when he left the management, which included a share of profits.

In 2006, for example, Bain created the Sensata enterprise, which manufactures sensors and controls for major U.S. automobile companies. Recently, Sensata Technologies has announced plans to close a U.S. plant and outsource 170 jobs to China. Even more astonishing is that Sensata's U.S. employees are training their Chinese replacements, who have been flown to the U.S. plant by the firm's management.

As a major investor in Sensata, Romney could gain from any outsourcing move that is likely to cut costs and increase the company's profits. It is reported that Romney owns at least \$7.8 million in eight Bain funds that collectively hold 51 percent of Sensata's shares.

Recently, conservative writers in the mass media have lauded Romney's role in destroying American production and jobs. Libertarian Charles Murray, for example, wrote in the *Wall Street Journal* that "Mitt Romney's resume at Bain should be a slam dunk. He has been a successful capitalist...Capitalism ... gives people a chance to get rich by creating value and reaping the rewards."

Slam dunk? Maybe for the super-wealthy. The rest of America just got plain slammed.

David Brooks, in a *New York Times* piece, "More Capitalism Please," suggests that what this country needs to get out of our current economic funk is for more Romney-style entrepreneurs to pursue additional off shoring and

outsourcing high profit opportunities to provide cheap goods (and high profits) to the U.S. market. Brooks apparently does not recognize, or comprehend, the difference between an unrestrained -- and inhumane -- capitalist system and a civilized capitalist economic society that America has been developing since Roosevelt's New Deal.

What if China built a shoe factory in California that was operated in the same way that factories are run at home? Here's what it would look like:

1. Children under 14 would work with their elders more than 60 hours a week.
2. There would be no occupational safety standards for workers.
3. The wage would be much less than the U.S. minimum wage.
4. Workers would not have social security or pension benefits.
5. The factory would have free-rein to pollute the surrounding environment.

If such a company were built, then the laws of the U.S. would shut it down, thereby preventing the factory from selling any shoes in American markets. Nevertheless, under the banner of "more capitalism please," Brooks argues that the Americans (especially managers of large corporations?) gain from having open access to cheaper goods from offshoring and outsourcing production to such grotesque factory conditions. He seems to forget entirely why the U.S. outlawed sweatshops and child labor, and introduced social security laws. Hint: it wasn't to enrich predatory capitalists at the expense of ordinary Americans.

The plea for more Romney-style capitalism would have us abandon our civilized social beliefs in treating all American workers with dignity. If we permitted American entrepreneurs to produce under the same uncivilized and unhealthy factory conditions as those practiced in China, their factories might very well sell cheaper products. But Brooks "more capitalism" is really a rallying cry for more sweatshop jobs, more child labor and more impoverishing of American workers so that offshoring and outsourcing entrepreneurs can make more millions and keep their incomes in offshore banks and out of the hands of the U.S. Internal Revenue Service.

It is true that if we would enforce the legal prohibitions on foreign production that prevent American firms from using sweatshops, child labor and other harmful practices to sell products and services in American markets, then the prices at Walmart and other retail firms might rise somewhat. But that surely is a small price to pay to make sure that Americans and their neighbors have decent paying jobs in a safe environment and their children are enjoying their childhoods in school, rather than working from dawn to dusk in a production process environment.

20120805-01 05:12 SteveB "Mitt Romney: 'Federal Reserve Should Avoid Stimulus'"

"Mitt Romney: 'Federal Reserve Should Avoid Stimulus'" by AP

Aug. 4, 2012, (http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/08/04/mitt-romney-federal-reserve-stimulus_n_1742753.html)

(WASHINGTON) Mitt Romney says the Federal Reserve shouldn't use new stimulus measures to boost the still-sluggish economy.

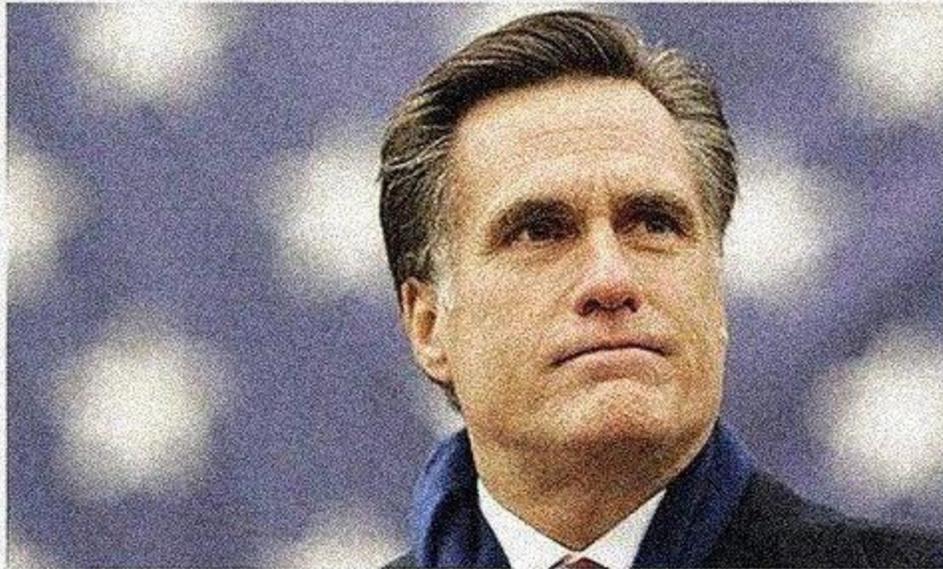
The Republican presidential hopeful says he doesn't think another round of stimulus would help the economy, arguing that previous measures didn't work.

Romney tells CNN's "State of the Union" in an interview scheduled to air Sunday morning that business incentives are preferable to more government intervention.

The Fed held off last week on taking further action to boost economic growth, but indicated those measures could be announced in the near future. The Fed also opted to keep interest rates near zero in an attempt to keep borrowing costs low.

Romney also doubled down on his vow to create 12 million new jobs during his first term, calling that goal realistic and achievable.

MONEY HAS NO MOTHERLAND



Money has no motherland; financiers are without patriotism and without decency; their sole object is gain."

— Napoleon Bonaparte, Emperor of France, 1815

"When Did the GOP Become the Whiners?" by Howell Raines, CNN

Aug. 1, 2012, (http://us.cnn.com/2012/08/01/opinion/raines-whining-republicans/index.html?iid=article_sidebar)

(Editor's note: Howell Raines is an author and former executive editor of *The New York Times*. He is working on a novel set during the Civil War.)

Mitt Romney press secretary Rich Gorka's outburst in Warsaw, Poland, on Tuesday, during which he told a reporter to "shove it," is of a piece with the Barnumesque spectacle of his candidate's world tour. But to this veteran of many campaign tours, the incident raises a provocative question about modern campaign history: When and how did the Republicans become the championship party of whining?

Rahm Emanuel brought it up earlier this month with his bracing instruction to Romney to quit complaining about Democrats' negative campaign ads. Such ads, deployed against Rick Santorum et al, were after all the instrument that brought Romney the GOP nomination.

Any short history of the whining sweepstakes should start by noting that a tectonic shift is taking place when the candidates and handlers of one side begin asking, in some form, this question: Why are they being allowed to do to us what we've happily been doing to them since -- to choose a recent precedent to this partisan shift -- the swift boating of John Kerry? You see what's that led to? Why, these Obamians want to turn Romney's brilliant business career into an unpatriotic defect!

The current situation is noteworthy because the Democratic Party seemed to have the exclusive franchise on piteous bleating dating back to Richard Nixon's victory in 1968 and throughout the Ronald Reagan and George H.W. Bush years. Truth be told, the Democrats managed to keep whining throughout most of the triumphant Bill Clinton years.

The game changer clearly has been Barack Obama, whose surprising taste for bloodying the noses of domestic critics and foreign adversaries seems to hark back to the last time the Democrats were unashamed political warriors.

That would be 1960, when John F. Kennedy and his snarling little brother Bobby made political "ruthlessness," unrestrained campaign spending, Teamster support and Mayor Richard Daley's vote-counting techniques into virtues. The era of bullying Democrats pretty well ended with Jimmy Carter's cardigan sweater and "malaise speech."

Video: Romney aide to media: 'Show respect!' (<http://www.cnn.com/video/#/video/politics/2012/07/31/exp-romney-press-aide.cnn>)

Then, with the victory of Reagan in 1980, the Democrats' claimed the whining trophy outright.

Walter Mondale sealed the Democratic ascendancy with his high-pitched complaints about Reagan's "compassion gap." And it has taken Romney to mount a full-scale effort to take back the title. (Pioneering credit, however, must be given to Sen. Bob Dole with his plaintive cries of "Where's the outrage?" in response to voters' apparently bottomless forgiveness for Clinton's shenanigans.)

To find the wellsprings of 2012 Republican whining, I think one has to look at the party's setters of tone and themes.

Start with Romney and his cries of foul over the Obama campaign's use of "Chicago-style" politics. The vibe of this complaint is that of a suburban prep schooler who has wandered into a playground where the mean city boys took his football and then twisted his arm really hard.

News: Romney trip may not matter much to voters in November

The signature moment in this year's use of the W word came in early July when an Obama staffer said that Romney was either a "felon" or was "misrepresenting" in his Federal filing about the length of his tenure as head of Bain Capital. Like much of today's campaign talk, the accusation was hyperbolic, verging on the demagogic. In other words, it was well within the strike zone the Republicans institutionalized in 1988 when they turned the GOP's amiable hitman Lee Atwater loose with his "Willie Horton" ad against Michael Dukakis.

But when the White House dared escalate the rhetorical arms race, Romney feigned outrage. Now he wanted an apology even though he had defended his own blistering attacks last spring on his primary rivals as a standard part of grown-up politics. Romney's campaign even piled one whine upon another by running a commercial showing a plaintive Hillary Clinton saying "Shame on you, Barack Obama" during the savage 2002 Democratic primaries.

"Stop whining!" Chicago Mayor Emanuel, Obama's former chief of staff, demanded on the George Stephanopoulos Sunday show recently. ""If you want to claim Bain Capital as your calling card to the White House, then defend what happened at Bain Capital."

There's something inescapably petulant about Romney's preference for critiquing all aspects of the economy—but not his role at Bain. **The Democrats should turn a deaf ear to his pleas for mercy on his record as a businessman and tax shelterer. The new Quinnipiac poll figures showing Obama ahead in Florida, Ohio and Pennsylvania demonstrate that Republican-style attack politics work for anyone with the gumption to use them, including this year's pugnacious Democrats.**

For the rest of this election season, if Democrats are smart, they'll keep reaching into the Lee Atwater bad-boy trick bag and let the season's reigning choir of complaint blend its many voices: the charismatic duo of John Boehner and Mitch McConnell, the tea party, the anchors and panelists of Fox News and now the hapless Rich Gorka.

They all seem to know the same tunes: Why don't voters believe what we do? Why isn't Obama the milquetoast he looks like? Why can't we change the photo-op rules for Mitt?

20120804-07	16:40	SteveB	"6 Brands Playing Footsie with Conservatives & Paying the Price"
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"6 Brands Playing Footsie with Conservatives and Paying the Price" by Dave Johnson, AlterNet

Aug. 3, 2012, (<http://www.alternet.org/news-amp-politics/6-brands-playing-footsie-conservatives-and-paying-price>)

Chick-fil-A might have gotten a nice, one-day sales boost with "Chick-fil-A Appreciation Day," but tying a national brand to aging white bigots is not a winning strategy – and the numbers prove it. Executives, directors and managers of American corporations take note: If your company is playing footsie with right-wing ideologues it can harm your company and your career. People are seriously fed up with companies that support and fund these right wingers, and brand-equity tracking surveys prove it. Here are 6 examples of companies and organizations that have flushed their brands down the right-wing toilet.

1. Chick-fil-A Brand Damage

Last month Chick-fil-A's CEO made public statements insulting and condemning America's lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) citizens and their right to marry. For obvious reasons this provoked a national, negative reaction. Conservatives tried to salvage the situation this week by putting on a big show of support with their "Chick-fil-A Appreciation Day," trying to make it appear as if it is good for a company to line itself up with far-right groups. These right wingers might be celebrating what seems to be a good day for a chicken sandwich chain, but common sense -- and the numbers -- clearly say something different.

Chick-fil-A is engaged in a PR effort to lead people to think that conservative support is helping the company, but according to YouGov's BrandIndex the company's "brand health" has dropped to its lowest levels in years. In their release, Chick-Fil-A takes a hit with fast food eaters, BrandIndex explains,

Chick-Fil-A's perception with fast food eaters nationwide has taken a significant hit in most regions of the US ... since president and COO Dan Cathy's perceived anti-gay remarks on July 16th.

... On July 16th, the day the Baptist Press published its Dan Cathy interview, Chick-Fil-A's Index score was 65, a very substantial 19 points above the Top National QSR Sector average score that day of 46. Four days later, Chick-Fil-A had fallen to 47 score... This past Wednesday, Chick-Fil-A had a 39 score...

This makes sense, considering that polling shows that the very demographic groups a company like Chick-fil-A wants to attract overwhelmingly support the right of gay and lesbian Americans to marry. According to recent Pew polling, for example the prized 18-29 demographic (they buy stuff) favors gay marriage by 65 percent to 30 percent.

But Chick-fil-A is doing great with the aging, white bigot crowd (they don't buy stuff)! Opposition to gay marriage gets great numbers among the 65+ crowd (31% favor, 56% oppose) and conservative Republicans (75% favor, 16% oppose) but almost every other demographic group favors gay marriage, and Chick-fil-A's position puts them well behind the curve. Is tying themselves to a dying demographic of angry white bigots really a winning long term brand strategy? (Hey, that sounds like a certain political party, too!)

2. Komen for the Cure: The Gold Standard For Brand Damage

Right now it's Chick-fil-A in the news for damaging its brand by playing footsie with the far right. But Chick-fil-A is hardly the first company or organization to self-destruct this way. The Susan G. Komen for the Cure® foundation is the gold standard for right-wing-footsie brand destruction.

Komen for the Cure was the premier charitable brand in the world. People used to give through their noses supporting Komen for the Cure's Race for the Cure, and buying pink-ribbon Komen-branded wristbands, clothing, gifts and other merchandise. Then, in a move to please the conservative right, the Susan G. Komen for the Cure foundation pulled funding from Planned Parenthood. The result was that according to a Harris Poll EquiTrend® Study, Komen's "brand equity" dropped 21 percent, one of the most dramatic plummets in brand-equity ever.

How far a drop was this? The study said Komen moved "from 'Gold Standard' to 'Trailing the Pack.'" Last year Komen was ranked among the top two brands they follow. This year it ranked No. 56. Top two to 56th – that's a drop of 54 spots! The value of the Komen brand is ruined. And brand destruction like this sticks; Komen is still having problems. A recent Race for the Cure on DC's National Mall drew only 25,000 participants, down 37.5% from a year ago.

By the way, the Komen executives behind the Planned Parenthood decision were forced out. Along with the company, people's careers were damaged after Komen's move to the right. In, Julie Teer, Susan G. Komen VP Of Development And Romney's Former Finance Director, Resigns, Huffington Post explains the extent of the damage done to people's careers,

Turnover at Susan G. Komen for the Cure continues five months after the flap over Planned Parenthood funding, with the national office's top fundraiser leaving the organization this week.

Vice President of Development Julie Teer will leave on Friday after four years at Komen ... She becomes at least the fifth executive to leave Komen's Dallas, Texas headquarters since February's debacle regarding funding to Planned Parenthood, in addition to at least half a dozen departures at affiliates around the nation.

You get the picture. Don't let this be you next.

3. TED vs the 99%

TED stands for "Technology, Entertainment, Design," and the organization puts on conferences in the US and UK. TED is well-known for its "TED Talks," videos of TED conference speakers discussing various interesting and important topics.

In May, wealthy venture capitalist Nick Hanau gave a TED Talk on income inequality. TED decided the subject was too "political" to release to their video audience, and said "business managers and entrepreneurs would feel insulted."

National Journal broke the story, in "Too Hot for TED: Income Inequality", reporting, "There's one idea, though, that TED's organizers recently decided was too controversial to spread: the notion that widening income inequality is a bad thing for America, and that as a result, the rich should pay more in taxes."

Some examples of the reaction this evoked include Salon, TED: Even more elitist than we thought and Mother Jones, The Charts TED Doesn't Want to Share.

The story also spread through social media and, finally, into the major media. Company directors and executives don't want to see stories like this one in Time, Was Nick Hanauer's TED Talk on Income Inequality Too Rich for Rich People?

Their slogan is "ideas worth spreading." But the folks at TED – the Technology Entertainment and Design nonprofit behind the TED Talks, beloved by geeks and others interested in novel new ideas – evidently think that some ideas are better left unspread. At least when the ideas in question challenge the conventional wisdom that rich entrepreneurs are the number one job creators.

There is no scientific measurement of the brand damage done to TED, but clearly the organization's brand is now damaged -- at least in the minds of 99% of us.

4. TD Ameritrade

In May news reports came out that TD Ameritrade's founder Joe Ricketts was funding an anti-Obama Super PAC. This hurt the company's brand image, even though Ricketts is no longer with Ameritrade.

ABC News summed it up, in *Joe Ricketts Drags TD Ameritrade Into the Political World. Much to the Company's Chagrin*:

Kim Hillyer, director of communications and public affairs for TD Ameritrade, did not mince words about the pickle in which her company now finds itself, thanks to the founder and former CEO of the company Joe Ricketts. "It's certainly a difficult situation," said Hillyer, referring to the calls from clients and members of the public ... about Ricketts' interest in launching a Super PAC to attack President Obama.

Later, the Huffington Post reported that the company had indeed lost customers.

5. Rush Limbaugh and Snapple

Early this year Sandra Fluke testified to a panel of Democratic House members following a male-only Republican hearing on birth control. She testified that the "Obamacare" health insurance mandate to cover birth control is important to the health of women. She told of a friend who, as a student, needed treatment for polycystic ovary syndrome, which is treated using contraceptive hormones costing over \$100 per month. Some insurance companies deny coverage for contraception, which is a financial hardship for many women.

Rush Limbaugh once again shocked the sensibilities of much of the public, declaring Fluke to be a "slut" because she used birth control. The public had had enough of this, and turned on Limbaugh's advertisers. Again, social media enabled people to take action.

Companies, seeing the damage that was occurring, began to flee. Look at the reports of the numbers of companies that stopped advertising in reaction to social media-generated pressure: March 6, *Hollywood Reporter*, Rush Limbaugh Sponsor Exodus Hits 43 as Sandra Fluke Fallout Continues, March 10, *Think Progress*, BREAKING: 98 Major Advertisers Dump Rush Limbaugh, Other Right-Wing Hosts, March 12, *Think Progress* again, EXCLUSIVE: 140 Companies Drop Advertising From Rush Limbaugh [Update: 142].

But these are not the first advertisers whose brands were hurt by their association with Limbaugh. Snapple-brand iced tea has never recovered from public reaction to the company being a major sponsor of Rush Limbaugh in the early 1990s. To this day people believe rumors about Snapple being associated with the far right, including one that the company is owned by the KKK.

6. McDonald's, Wendy's, Intuit, Mars, Kraft Foods, Coca-Cola, PepsiCo, AT&T, GM, Walgreens and Other Companies That Support or Supported ALEC

The American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC) is a secretive, far-right organization that pushes stealth laws supporting right-wing and large-corporate interests through state legislatures. The organization is supported by right-wing, "conservative movement" funders and corporations seeking tax breaks and other legislation that gives them an edge over their competitors. These companies thought ALEC could stay under the radar and their donations would be hidden from the public. But the organization's right-wing agenda enraged the public and led to increased scrutiny, which led a number of companies to be very publicly embarrassed.

ALEC was first exposed when the Center for Media and Democracy (CMD) and *The Nation* obtained documents showing the extent of the organization's activities. *The Nation's* article *ALEC Exposed*, and CMD's *ALEC Exposed* website tell the story.

Then, the Trayvon Martin shooting case exposed how ALEC helped push through Florida's dangerous "shoot first" law in Florida, and people became fed up. Now people are learning that ALEC is also getting state laws passed that limit the voting rights of minorities, limit the power of working people to negotiate for better wages and limit the power of citizens to fight for cleaner environment.

The *NY Times*, listed a number of companies by name and tied their names to the right-wing agenda in an editorial, Embarrassed by Bad Laws, which brought public pressure on corporations supporting ALEC,

The council, known as ALEC, has since become better known, with news organizations alerting the public to the damage it has caused: voter ID laws that marginalize minorities and the elderly, antiunion bills that hurt the middle class and the dismantling of protective environmental regulations.

... In recent weeks, McDonald's, Wendy's, Intuit, Mars, Kraft Foods, Coca-Cola and PepsiCo have stopped supporting the group, responding to pressure from activists and consumers who have formed a grass-roots counterweight to corporate treasuries.

Once again companies seriously harmed their public image -- their brand equity -- by playing footsie with the right.

Hiding Doesn't Help

Some companies understand the potential for damage to their brand, so they try to hide their support for the right. But as the ALEC exposure demonstrated, this just increases the potential to further incite public rage. One area where companies are trying to mask their right-wing support is through the use of organizations like Karl Rove's Crossroads GPS, which runs ads supporting Republican candidates. Crossroads GPS tries to mask its election agenda by calling itself an "advocacy group," claiming they only run ads to advance social welfare. This allows them to keep their donors secret. The same is true of the US Chamber of Commerce, which spends tens, even hundreds of millions on campaign advertisements for Republicans. But in reality both are just fronts for the Republican party.

Corporations supporting organizations like Crossroads GPS and the US Chamber of Commerce do so expecting that their funding of the right will remain anonymous. But sometimes the law does catch up, and these companies also risk damaging their brand equity when a fed-up public finds out. And this may well be just about to happen. As Business Week reported in, FEC Orders Names of Donors Fueling Issue Ads Be Disclosed, "The Federal Election Commission today said that it would require groups funding issue ads, such as the U.S. Chamber of Commerce and Crossroads GPS, to disclose their donors."

Citizens Don't Like Corporations Interfering With Democracy

Is your company supporting a right-wing organization that promises to keep your identity secret while helping you get special tax breaks and government "privatization" contracts, break unions, keep wages down or gain a legislative edge over competitors? If you think this benefits you in the long run, you had best think again. This is the lesson: if you direct or manage a corporation you should not risk your brand by siding against the 99% of the population that is becoming angrier and angrier at corporate interference in our democracy. If you work at a company doing this, use your best efforts to make them aware of the potential for damage -- your job could be saved if you stop them before they are exposed.

Supporting the right in an attempt to purchase shortcuts to profits will also damage your company culture. The Huffington Post reported, in Corporate Political Donations Linked To Lower Stock Value: Study, that "Corporations might want to reconsider throwing large sums of money at Washington," because there is a correlation with poor company performance:

Rajesh K. Aggarwal and Tracy Wang from the University of Minnesota and Felix Meschke from the University of Kansas examined corporate donations given to political candidates for federal offices from 1991 to 2004 and found that for every additional \$10,000 a firm contributed, its stock market price dropped 7.4 basis points below expectation. Corporations that donated large sums of money were also linked to poor governance and agency problems, the study found. [emphasis added, to emphasize]

Here Is What To Do

It isn't hard to protect yourself from angry public reactions that can lead to the brand damage that Chick-fil-A and Komen for the Cure are suffering. Just be good citizens. As a corporation your mission is supposed to be to serve the public good by providing quality goods and services, supporting your products, providing good jobs that respect the humanity and intelligence of your employees, paying good wages and helping care for the communities that surround and support your business. So limit your greed, provide a good product or service to the public, do what is right, and focus on doing things that help people and the communities where you do business. That is the corporate behavior – the “success” – that the market wants to reward. That might sound old-fashioned in today's cutthroat business climate, but, really, doing the right thing is how you maximize shareholder value in the long term.

It's not hard to do the right thing, and in the long term it pays off for everyone.

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“Towards a ‘Soft Invasion’? The Launching of a ‘Humanitarian War’ against Syria” by Michel Chossudovsky, OpEdNews

Aug. 4, 2012 (<http://www.opednews.com/articles/Towards-A-Soft-Invasion--by-Michel-Chossudovsk-120804-609.html>)

An all-out "humanitarian war" against Syria is on the drawing board of the Pentagon, which, if carried out, could lead the World into a regional war extending from the Eastern Mediterranean to the heartland of Central Asia. The underlying scenario of Worldwide conflict goes far beyond the diabolical design of Orwell's 1984.

The Obama administration, in liaison with London, Paris, Tel Aviv and NATO headquarters in Brussels, is mulling over various military "intervention options" directed against Syria, including the conduct of both naval and air operations in support of "opposition" rebel forces on the ground.

The US and its impervious British ally are on a "humanitarian war footing."

Allied forces including intelligence operatives and special forces have reinforced their presence on the ground in support of the opposition's "Free Syrian Army" (FSA). The British Ministry of Defense is reported to be "drawing up contingency plans in case the UK decides to deploy troops to the volatile region."

Naval and air force deployments have already been announced by the British Ministry of Defense. According to London's news tabloids, quoting "authoritative" military sources; "...The escalating civil war [in Syria] made it increasingly likely that the West would be forced to step in." (*Daily Mail*, July 24, 2012)

An Iraq-style "shock and awe" bombing campaign is, for practical reasons, not being contemplated: "defence analysts warned that a force of at least 300,000 troops would be needed to carry out a full-scale intervention [in Syria]. Even then, this would face fierce resistance. ..." (Ibid)

Rather than carrying out an all-out Blitzkrieg, the US-NATO-Israel military alliance has chosen to intervene under the diabolical R2P frame of "humanitarian warfare." Modeled on Libya, the follow broad stages are envisaged:

1. A US-NATO backed insurgency integrated by death squads is launched under the disguise of a "protest movement" (mid-March 2011 in Daraa)
2. British, French, Qatari and Turkish Special Forces are on the ground in Syria, advising and training the rebels as well as overseeing special operations. Mercenaries hired by private security companies are also involved in supporting rebels forces.

3. The killings of innocent civilians by the Free Syrian Army (FSA) are deliberately carried out as part of a covert intelligence operation. (See SYRIA: Killing Innocent Civilians as part of a US Covert Op. Mobilizing Public Support for a R2P War against Syria, Global Research, May 2012)
4. The Syrian government is then blamed for the resulting atrocities. Media disinformation is geared towards demonizing the Syrian government. Public opinion is led into endorsing a military intervention on humanitarian grounds.
5. Responding to public outrage, US-NATO is then "forced to step in" under a Humanitarian "Responsibility to Protect" (R2P) mandate. Media propaganda goes into high gear. "The International Community" comes to the rescue of the Syrian people."
6. Warships and fighter jets are then deployed to the Eastern Mediterranean. These actions are coordinated with logistical support to the rebels and Special forces on the ground.
7. The final objective is "regime change" leading to the "break-up of the country" along sectarian lines and/or the installation of an "Islamist-dominated or influenced regime" modelled on Qatar and Saudi Arabia.
8. War plans in relation to Syria are integrated with those pertaining to Iran. The road to Tehran goes through Damascus. The broader implications of US-NATO intervention are military escalation and the possible unleashing of a regional war extending from the Eastern Mediterranean to Central Asia, in which China and Russia could be directly or indirectly involved.

Stages 1 through 4 have already been implemented.

Stage 5 has been announced.

Stage 6 involving the deployment of British and French warships to the Eastern Mediterranean is slated to be launched, according to the British Ministry of Defense, in "later Summer." (See Michel Chossudovsky, The US-NATO War on Syria: Western Naval Forces Confront Russia Off the Syrian Coastline? Global Research, July 26, 2012.)

Phase 7, namely "regime change" -- which constitutes the end game of humanitarian warfare -- has been announced on numerous occasions by Washington. In the words of Defense Secretary Leon Panetta, referring to President Bashar Al Assad: "It's no longer a question of whether he's coming to an end, it's when."

The End Game: Destabilizing the Secular State, Installing "Political Islam"

The Royal United Services Institute for Defence and Security (RUSI), a London based think-tank, with close links to both Britain's Ministry of Defense and the Pentagon. has intimated that "some sort of western [military] intervention in Syria is looking increasingly likely..." What RUSI has in mind in its Syria Crisis *Briefing* entitled A Collision Course for Intervention, is what might be described as "A Soft Invasion" leading either to a "break-up of the country" along sectarian lines and/or the installation of an "Islamist-dominated or influenced regime" modelled on Qatar and Saudi Arabia.

Several "scenarios" involving "clandestine" intelligence operations are put forth. The unspoken objective of these military and intelligence options is to destabilize the secular State and implement, through military means, the transition towards a post-Assad "Islamist-dominated or influenced regime" modeled on Qatar and Saudi Arabia:

"A better insight is needed on the activities and relationships of Al-Qaida and other Syrian and international Salafist jihadists that are now entering the country in increasing numbers. **The floodgates are likely to open even further as international jihadists are emboldened by signs of significant opposition progress against the regime. Such elements have the support of Saudi Arabia and Qatar and would undoubtedly have a role in Syria following the collapse of Assad.** The scope of their involvement would need to be factored into intervention planning." (Ibid, p. 9, emphasis added)

While recognizing that the rebel fighters are outright terrorists involved in the killing of civilians, the RUSI *Briefing*, invoking tactical and intelligence considerations, suggests that allied forces should "nonetheless support the terrorists." (i.e., the terrorist brigades have been supported by the US-led coalition from the very outset of the insurgency in mid-March 2011. Special Forces have integrated the insurgency):

"What military, political and security challenges would they [the jihadists] then present in the country, to the region and to the West? **Issues include the possibility of an Islamist-dominated or influenced regime** inheriting sophisticated weaponry, including anti-aircraft and anti-ship missile systems and chemical and biological weapons that could be transferred into the hands of international terrorists. **At the tactical level, intelligence would be needed to identify the most effective groups, and how best to support them. It would also be essential to know how they operate, and whether support might assist them to massacre rivals or carry out indiscriminate attacks against civilians, something we have already witnessed among Syrian opposition groups.**"(*RUSI - SYRIA CRISIS BRIEFING: A Collision Course for Intervention*, London July 2012, emphasis added, p.9)

The foregoing acknowledgment confirms the US-NATO's resolve to use "Political Islam" --including the deployment of CIA-MI6 supported Al Qaeda-affiliated terrorist groups -- to pursue their hegemonic ambitions in Syria.

Covert operations by Western intelligence in support of "opposition" terrorist entities are launched to weaken the secular state, foment sectarian violence and create social divisions. We will recall that in Libya, the "pro-democracy" rebels were led by Al Qaeda-affiliated paramilitary brigades under the supervision of NATO Special Forces. The much-vaunted "Liberation" of Tripoli was carried out by former members of the Libya Islamic Fighting Group (LIFG).

Military Options and Actions. Towards a "Soft Invasion"?

Several concrete military options -- which largely reflect ongoing Pentagon-NATO thinking on the matter -- are contemplated in the RUSI Syria Crisis Briefing. All these options are based on a scenario of "regime change" requiring the intervention of allied forces in Syrian territory. What is contemplated is a "Soft Invasion" modelled on Libya under an R2P humanitarian mandate rather than an all-out "shock and awe" *Blitzkrieg*.

The RUSI Briefing, however, confirms that continued and effective support to the Free Syrian Army (FSA) rebels will eventually require the use of **"air power in the form of fighter jets and sea-, land-, and air-launched missile systems"** combined with the influx of Special Forces and the landing of "elite airborne and amphibious infantry" (Ibid, p16.)

This transition towards concrete naval and air power support to the rebels is no doubt also motivated by the setbacks of the insurgency (including substantial rebel losses) following the backlash by government forces in the wake of the July 18 terror attack against the National Security headquarters in Damascus, which led to the death of the Minister of Defense General Daoud Rajha and two other senior members of the country's national defense team.

Various overlapping military actions are envisaged, to be carried out sequentially both prior and in the wake of the proposed "regime change":

"The top-of-the-range option, destruction of the Syrian armed forces through an Iraq-style 'shock and awe' invasion, could undoubtedly be achieved by a US-led coalition. As with all other forms of intervention, however, handling the aftermath would be far less predictable, and could draw coalition forces into a long-running and bloody quagmire. At present that option can be excluded as a realistic possibility. ... There is no doubt that the substantial neutralisation of Syria's air defence infrastructure could be achieved by a US-led air operation. But it would require a major, sustained and extremely costly campaign including Special Forces deployed on the ground to assist targeting. ...

The remaining intervention options fall broadly into three sometimes overlapping categories. ... **The first category is military enforcement action to reduce or end the violence in Syria** ... to prevent Assad's forces from attacking the civilian population by direct [military] action. [RUSI ignores the fact that the killings are committed by the FSA rather than by government forces, M.C.]

The second is seeking to bring about regime change by a combination of support for opposition forces and direct military action. The second category might apply in the aftermath of regime collapse. **The objective would be to support a post-Assad government by helping to stabilize the country** and protect the population against inter-factional violence and retribution. ... A stabilization force would be deployed at the request of the new government. In any intervention scenario there might be a need to either destroy or secure Syria's chemical weapons, if they were about to be used, transferred or otherwise made insecure. This would require such specialized and potentially substantial combat forces, it is likely to be a mission that only the US could execute. [Reminiscent of Iraq's WMD, the pretext of Syria's chemical weapons is being used to justify a more muscled military intervention, M.C.]

The third category is humanitarian relief -- bringing in supplies and medical aid to besieged populations. ... This form of intervention, which would most likely be conducted under the auspices of the UN, would require aid agencies such as the International Red Crescent as well **as armed military forces including air power, again perhaps based on a NATO coalition. Humanitarian relief might be needed before or after a change of regime.** (See *RUSI - SYRIA CRISIS BRIEFING: A Collision Course for Intervention*, London July 2012, emphasis added, p.9-10)

"Humanitarian relief" is often used as a pretext to send in combat units. Special forces and intelligence ops are frequently dispatched in under an NGO cover.

Concrete US-NATO Military Actions

Does the RUSI *Briefing* reflect the current outlook of US-NATO military planning in relation to Syria?

What concrete military and intelligence actions have been taken by the Western military alliance in the wake of the Chinese and Russian vetoes in the United Nations Security Council?

The deployment of a powerful naval armada of French and British warships is already envisaged for deployment at an unstipulated date "later in the Summer." (See Michel Chossudovsky, *The US-NATO War on Syria: Western Naval Forces Confront Russia Off the Syrian Coastline?*, Global Research, July 26, 2012)

The British Ministry of Defense, however, has intimated that Royal Navy deployments to the Middle East could only only be activated "after" the London Olympic games. Two of Britain's largest warships, the HMS Bullwark and the HMS Illustrious have been assigned, at tremendous cost to British taxpayers, to "ensuring the security" of the London Olympics. HMS Bulwark is stationed in Weymouth Bay for the duration of the games. HMS Illustrious is "currently sitting on the Thames in central London." (Ibid)

These planned naval operations are carefully coordinated with stepped up allied support to the "Free Syrian Army," integrated by foreign jihadist mercenaries trained in Qatar, Iraq, Turkey and Saudi Arabia on behalf of the Western military alliance.

Will the US-NATO alliance launch an all-out air operation?

Syria's air defense capabilities, according to reports, are based on Russia's advanced S-300 system? (Unconfirmed reports point to the cancellation of delivery by Russia, following pressure from Israel, of the advanced S-300 surface-to-air missile system to Syria) (See Israel convinces Russia to cancel Syrian S-300 missile deal: official, Xinhua, June 28, 2012) Reports also suggest the installation of an advanced Russian radar system. (See Report: Russia Sent Syria Advanced S-300 Missiles, Israel National News, November 24, 2011).

The Role of Special Forces

In the months ahead, allied forces will no doubt focus on disabling the country's military capabilities including its air defense and communications systems, through a combination of covert operations, cyber-warfare and US-NATO sponsored SFA terror attacks.

"The Free Syrian Army" rebels are NATO's foot soldiers. FSA commanders, many of whom are part of Al Qaeda-affiliated entities, are in permanent liaison with British and French Special Forces inside Syria. The RUSI report recommends that the rebels should be supported through the "**deployment into the country of Special Forces advisers with air support on call:**

"Advisers working alongside rebel commanders, perhaps accompanied by small units of Special Forces troops, could be tactically and strategically decisive, as it proved in both Afghanistan in 2001 and in Libya in 2011. (RUSI, op cit, p.10)

Special Forces have been on the ground in Syria since the outset of the insurgency. Reports also confirm the role of private security companies including former Blackwater mercenaries in the training of the FSA rebels. In what is described as "America's War Under the Table," Special forces on the ground are in permanent liaison with allied military and intelligence.

The Influx of Mercenary Jihadist Fighters

In the wake of the UN Security council deadlock, a speeding up in the recruitment and training of mercenary jihadist fighters is unfolding.

According to a British Army source, British Special Forces (SAS) are now training Syrian "rebels" in Iraq "in military tactics, weapons handling and communications systems." The report also confirms that advanced military command training is being conducted in Saudi Arabia on behalf of the Western military alliance:

"British and French Special Forces have been actively training members of the FSA from a base in Turkey. Some reports indicate that training is also taking place in locations in Libya and Northern Lebanon. British MI6 operatives and UKSF (SAS/SBS) personnel have reportedly been training the rebels in urban warfare as well as supplying them with arms and equipment. US CIA operatives and special forces are believed to be providing communications assistance to the rebels." (*Elite Forces UK*, January 5, 2012)

"More than 300 [Syrian rebels] have passed through a base just inside the Iraq border, while a command course is run in Saudi Arabia.

Groups of 50 rebels at a time are being trained by two private security firms employing former Special Forces personnel. 'Our role is purely instructional teaching tactics, techniques and procedures,' said a former SAS member.

... "If we can teach them how to take cover, to shoot and avoid being spotted by snipers it will hopefully help." (*Daily Mail*, July 22, 2012)

The Role of Turkey and Israel

Turkey's military high command has been in liaison with NATO headquarters since August 2011 pertaining to the active recruitment of thousands of Islamist "freedom fighters," reminiscent of the enlistment of Mujahideen to wage the CIA's jihad (holy war) in the heyday of the Soviet-Afghan war:

"Also discussed in Brussels and Ankara, our sources report, is a **campaign to enlist thousands of Muslim volunteers in Middle East countries and the Muslim world** to fight alongside the Syrian rebels. The Turkish army would house these volunteers, train them and secure their passage into Syria. (DEBKAfile, NATO to give rebels anti-tank weapons, August 14, 2011, emphasis added)

The recent influx of foreign fighters on a significant scale suggests that this diabolical Mujahideen recruitment program developed more than a year ago, has come to fruition.

Turkey is also supporting Muslim Brotherhood fighters in Northern Syria. As part of its support to SFA rebels, "Turkey has set up a secret base with allies Saudi Arabia and Qatar to direct vital military and communications aid

to Syria's rebels from a city near the border." (Exclusive: Secret Turkish nerve center leads aid to Syria rebels. Reuters, July 27, 2012).

Israel's role in supporting the rebels, largely characterised by covert intel ops, has been "discrete" but nonetheless significant. From the very outset, Mossad has supported radical Salafist terrorist groups, which became active in Southern Syria at the outset of the protest movement in Daraa in mid-March. Reports suggest that financing for the Salafi insurgency is coming from Saudi Arabia. (See Syrian army closes in on Damascus suburbs, *The Irish Times*, May 10, 2011).

While channeling covert support to the SFA, Israel is also supporting Syrian Kurdish separatists in North Syria. The Kurdish (KNC) opposition group has close links to the Kurdish Regional Government of Massoud Barzani in northern Iraq, which is directly supported by Israel.

The Kurdish separatist agenda is slated to be used by Washington and Tel Aviv to seek the break up of Syria along ethnic and religious lines -- into several separate and "independent" political entities. It is worth noting that Washington has also facilitated the dispatch of Kurdish Syrian "opposition militants" to Kosovo in May to participate in training sessions using the "terrorist expertise" of the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA). (See Michel Chossudovsky, "Hidden US-Israeli Military Agenda: Break Syria into Pieces," *Global Research*, June 2012)

The not so hidden US-Israeli military agenda is to "Break Syria into Pieces," with a view to supporting Israeli expansionism. (*The Jerusalem Post*, May 16, 2012)

Confrontation with Russia

What can we expect in the months ahead:

1. A naval deployment in the Eastern Mediterranean, the military objective of which has not been clearly defined by allied forces.
2. A greater influx of foreign fighters and death squads into Syria and the conduct of carefully targeted terrorist attacks in coordination with US-NATO.
3. An escalation in the deployment of allied special forces including mercenaries from private security companies on contract to Western intelligence. The objective, under the "Damascus Volcano and Syrian Earthquake" operation, ultimately consisted in extending the SFA terror attacks to Syria's capital, under the supervision of Western Special Forces and intelligence operatives on the ground. (See Thierry Meyssan, The battle of Damascus has begun, *Voltaire Net*, July 19, 2012) This option of targeting Damascus has failed. The rebels have also been pushed back in heavy fighting in Aleppo, Syria's second largest city.
4. The weakening of Russia's role in Syria -- including its functions under the bilateral military cooperation agreement with Damascus -- is also part of the US-NATO military-intelligence agenda. This could result in terrorist attacks directed against Russian nationals living in Syria.

A terror attack against Russia's naval base in Tartus was announced by the FSA less than two weeks following the UN Security Council face-off; no doubt was ordered by US-NATO, with a view to threatening Russia.

Following the arrival of Russia's naval flotilla of ten warships stationed off the Syrian coast, an FSA spokesman confirmed (July 26) their intention to attack Russia's naval base in Tartus:

"We have a warning for the Russian forces: if they will send any more weapons that kill our families and the Syrian people we will hit them hard inside Syria," said Louay al-Mokdad, a logistical coordinator for the Free Syrian Army (FSA).

"Informers inside the regime are telling that us that there is a big weapons' shipment arriving at Tartous in the next two weeks. We don't want to attack the port, we are not terrorists, but if they keep acting like this we will have no choice.'

"The FSA has formed a 'Naval brigade,' made up of defectors from the Syrian navy, which operates close to Tartous. 'Many of our men used to work in the port of Tartous and they know it well,' said Captain Walid, a former officer in the Syrian Navy. 'We are watching very closely the movements of the Russians.'

"'We can easily destroy the port. If we hit the weapons' stores with anti-tank missiles or another weapon it would trigger a devastating explosion,' said an FSA representative. 'Or we can attack the ships directly.'" (Syrian rebels threaten to attack Russian naval base - World - DNA, July 26, 2012)

Were Russia's naval base to be attacked, this would, in all likelihood, be undertaken under the supervision of allied special forces and intelligence operatives.

While Russia has the required military capabilities to effectively defend its Tartus naval base, an attack on Russia's naval base would constitute an act of provocation, which could set the stage for a more visible involvement of Russian forces inside Syria. Such a course could potentially also lead to a direct confrontation between Russian forces and Western special forces and mercenaries operating within rebel ranks.

According to the *RUSI Syria Crisis Briefing* quoted above: "Anticipating Russian action and counter-action would have to be a major factor in any Western [military] intervention plan [in Syria]. The Russians are certainly capable of bold and unexpected moves..." (RUSI, op cit, p.5).

The World at a Dangerous Crossroads

An all-out "humanitarian war" against Syria is on the drawing board of the Pentagon, which, if carried out, could lead the World into a regional war extending from the Eastern Mediterranean to the heartland of Central Asia.

A sophisticated and all-encompassing propaganda program supports war in the name of World peace and global security.

The underlying scenario of Worldwide conflict goes far beyond the diabolical design of Orwell's 1984.

The Ministry of Truth upholds war as a peace-making undertaking by twisting realities upside down.

In turn, the lies and fabrications of the mainstream media are presented with various innuendos in a complex web of deceit.

In a cynical twist, documented atrocities against Syrian civilians committed by the West's "opposition" are now being acknowledged (rather than blamed on government forces) as "unavoidable" in the painful transition towards to "democracy."

The broader consequences of "the Big Lie" are obfuscated.

Global humanitarian warfare becomes a consensus which nobody can challenge.

The war on Syria is part of an integrated Worldwide military agenda. The road to Tehran goes through Damascus. Iran, Russia, China and North Korea are also being threatened.

With the deployment of the Franco-British naval armada later this Summer, Western warships in the Eastern Mediterranean would be contiguous to those deployed by Russia, which is conducting its own war games, leading to a potential "Cold War style confrontation" between Russian and Western naval forces. (See Michel Chossudovsky, *The US-NATO War on Syria: Western Naval Forces Confront Russia Off the Syrian Coastline?*, Global Research, July 26, 2012)

A war on Syria, which would inevitably involve Israel and Turkey, could constitute the spark towards a regional war directed against Iran, in which Russia and China could be (directly or indirectly) involved.

It is crucial to spread the word and break the channels of media disinformation.

A critical and unbiased understanding of what is happening in Syria is of crucial importance in reversing the tide of military escalation.

It is essential that people in the UK, France and the US prevent "the late Summer" naval WMD deployment to the Eastern Mediterranean from occurring.

The British Ministry of Defense has announced that several British warships are required "to ensure the security" of the Olympic Games. *HMS Bulwark* is stationed in Weymouth Bay for the duration of the games. *HMS Illustrious* is "currently sitting on the Thames in central London." The deployment of British warships including *HMS Bulwark* and *HMS Illustrious* to the Middle East is envisaged "after" the Olympic Games.

20120805-04	07:55	SteveB	Proposed Constitutional Amendment: NO SECRET MONEY!
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An addition to the Bill of Rights:

THERE CAN BE NO SECRET MONEY!

The people have the right to all information regarding all transactions involving legal tender or its equivalent. Period!

This would apply to all "American" and multi-national companies and individuals who do or wish to ever do business in or with the U.S. or its citizens or companies. In other words, the branches of government would be permitted—hell, encouraged—to go after as much of the international \$trillions as possible, as well as the domestic. International boundaries must no longer provide secret havens for those who are essentially criminals and tax cheats.

Secret money is almost always against the public good.

It corrupts and interferes with free markets, helps create and sustain hidden monopolies, and enables all the shady dealings—especially those involving drugs, guns, weapons of war, and influence—that essentially result in the enslavement of peoples to this day, including in the "free" United States of Amerika.

What do you think?

20120805-05	08:36	SteveB	Video: "World's Largest Drive-In Restaurant"
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"World's Largest Drive-In Restaurant" by Blue Ribbon Hunter, Yahoo! News

July 30, 2012, (http://screen.yahoo.com/world-s-largest-drive-in-restaurant-30103086.html?pb_list=809f7f41-46e5-4104-9eba-e0702551faaf)

The Varsity is a drive-in restaurant in Atlanta, GA that serves up to 40,000 people per day. They are also the single largest distributor of Coke products in the world. Watch to find out why people can't get enough of The Varsity!

20120805-06	10:17	Mr. Sueman Bello	CONFIDENCE TRUST AND HONEST
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RE-REMITTANCE OF \$25.200 MILLION USD

Dear friend, With Due Respect

I know that this message will come to you as a surprise. It's just my Urgent need for foreign partner that made me to contact you for this transaction of mutual benefit. Please feel free to read my message and respond back urgently. My name is Mr. Suleman Bello, from Burkina Faso in West Africa am working with African development bank (A.D.B) Ouagadougou Burkina Faso as the director of Auditing and account Department I discovered existing dormant account for 5 years. When I discovered that there had been neither continuation nor withdrawals from this account for this long period and our banking laws stipulates that any unserviceable account for more than 5 years will go into the bank revenue as an unclaimed fund. The request of foreigner in this transaction is necessary because our late customer was a foreigner and a burkinabe cannot stand as next of kin to a foreigner.

I have made personal inquiries about the depositor and his next of kin but sadly, the depositor and his next of kin died on their way to business tycoon, and he left no body behind for this claim I only made this investigation just to be double sure of this fact and since I have been unsuccessful in locating the relatives, I can not directly take out this money without the help of a foreigner and that is why I am contacting you for an assistance to claim the funds and share it with me. I am seeking your co-operation to present you as the next of kin to the account. There is practically no risk involved, the transaction will be executed under a legitimate arrangement that will protect you and i from any breach of law. I seek your concern for further information.

Amount to claim US\$25,200,000.00.

Now my questions are:

1. Can you handle this project?
2. Can I give you this trust?.....

Upon the receipt of your reply, I will give you the full details on how the business will be executed and also note that you will have 40% of the above mentioned sum as your own share while 50% will be for me, and 10% Will be mapped out for balances of all expenses we are going to incur at the cost of inheriting the fund.

I am expecting your urgent response to enable me inform you on how the business will be executed. Please I would like you to keep this transaction confidential and as a top secret or delete if you are not interested,

My Regards to your family, Thanks. Mr. Suleman Bello.

20120805-08	11:21	SteveM	Fw: 12 Reasons People Vote Democrat
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[Source of original email unknown. -SteveB]

When your family or friends cannot explain why they voted Democrat, give them this list. Then they can then pick a reason from this "TOP 12".

1. I voted Democrat because I love the fact that I can now marry whatever I want. I've decided to marry my German Shepherd.
2. I voted Democrat because I believe oil companies' profits of 4% on a gallon of gas are obscene, but the government taxing the same gallon of gas at 15% isn't. [How are the 2 even related? -SteveB]
3. I voted Democrat because I believe the government will do a better job of spending the money I earn than I would.
4. I voted Democrat because Freedom of Speech is fine as long as nobody is offended by it.
5. I voted Democrat because I'm way too irresponsible to own a gun, and I know that my local police are all I need to protect me from murderers and thieves.

6. I voted Democrat because I believe that people who can't tell us if it will rain on Friday can tell us that the polar ice caps will melt away in ten years if I don't start driving a Prius.
7. I voted Democrat because I'm not concerned about millions of babies being aborted so long as we keep all death row inmates alive.
8. I voted Democrat because I think illegal aliens have a right to free health care, education, and Social Security benefits, and we should take away the social security from those who paid into it.
9. I voted Democrat because I believe that businesses should not be allowed to make profits for themselves. They need to break even and give the rest away to the government for redistribution as the Democrats see fit.
10. I voted Democrat because I believe liberal judges need to rewrite the Constitution every few days to suit some fringe kooks who would never get their agendas past the voters.
11. I voted Democrat because I think that it's better to pay billions to people who hate us for their oil, but not drill our own because it might upset some endangered beetle, gopher or fish.
12. I voted Democrat because my head is so firmly planted up my a*s, it's unlikely that I'll ever have another point of view.

20120805-10 11:48 SteveM Fw: Letter to President Obama from Charlie Daniels (to SteveB)

Don't tell me you don't like his opinion, tell him you don't like his opinion. Here's the link, maybe your "work" and intellect will be appreciated.

You're too f*cking smart for the rest of us, thank God we have someone like you to tell us how to live.

http://www.charliedanielsssoapbox.com/view_forum.php?id=4

Here's my open letter To Barack Hussein Obama by Charlie Daniels.

Mr. Obama,

You recently made a statement to the effect that, "If you have a business you didn't build it, you had help," implying that the federal government helped build our businesses by virtue of paving roads and building bridges and keeping the nation safe from foreign invasion.

First of all, Mr. Obama, if I'm going to take advice about business it will not be from somebody who has had absolutely no business experience like yourself.

Secondly, Mr. Obama, I vehemently disagree with your premise.

Where was your government when I spent as much as 16 weeks away from my wife and infant son to get a business started?

Where were you on those cold winter nights when my old bus broke down in the middle of nowhere and we had to scramble to make the next show, nobody from the government came along to give us a ride?

Where was your government when I had to borrow money from a bank to make my payroll?

Where was your government while I was digging out of a two million dollar debt, playing every smoky beer joint I could to keep from losing everything I owned?

Mr. Obama, I want to make you aware of a fact. It is the federal government's responsibility to build roads and bridges and keep the nation safe. That's what the federal government is supposed to do, not create an entitlement society that is totally unsustainable and pile up debt that we can't pay.

And who do you think paid for those roads and bridges in the first place, and have been doing it for 200 years before you were even born?

The citizens of this nation do not need to pay more taxes, the federal government needs to stop spending money it doesn't have and has to borrow. Because the truth of the matter is that no matter how much taxes the government collects, things are only going to get worse because you'll only spend it and demand even more.

Mr. Obama you have divided this nation by making the have-nots believe that anybody who has been successful has done so at their expense, that anything they've accumulated has been stolen, not earned. That hard work and risk had nothing to do with their success, because they've just been lucky and should give a big part of what they earn to the government to pass on to those who don't even try to be successful.

Look at what's going on with the African-Americans who put their hopes and complete confidence in you and voted overwhelmingly for you. The unemployment rate is 14% and the unemployment among young African Americans is something like 40%

Is that what hope and change is all about?

Look at what's happening in your hometown of Chicago where the murder rate is through the roof.

Do you think your baseless rhetoric about the unfairness of the successful in America is going to help soothe the situation?

Have you ever considered reaching out to them, instead of fanning the flames?

Mr. Obama I don't think you like America very much. I think you'd like to redesign it from the ground up, to turn it into a lazy, unproductive, secular, socialist society.

Well, that just won't flush in a lot of ways, the most prominent being that when all the productive people have given up and stopped trying, when all the investors stop investing, when 80% of the population is living on government hand outs, your government is going to run out of money and this nation will sink into chaos.

But Mr. Obama, I'm beginning to think that's what you want.

My help cometh from the Lord who made Heaven and Earth - not the government who made debt and class envy.

What do you think?

Pray for our troops, and for our country.

God Bless America, Charlie Daniels

20120805-09	11:28	SteveG	The Tea Party's Constitutional Issues
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I hear that people – the Tea Party, the right, the Republicans, and maybe others – want to take back our constitution. They feel that the US government has gone away from what the founding fathers intended. I have not heard or understand what they are referring to, until late last week and I heard a reference to Article 1, Section 8 as the source of the constitution that has been violated and needs to be taken back.

Below is Article 1, Section 8. I have read it a few times and do not understand what problem the Tea Party, far right, etc. see with the government and the constitution.

What am I missing?

from the U.S. Constitution

1.8 The Congress shall have Power To lay and collect Taxes, Duties, Imposts and Excises, to pay the Debts and provide for the common Defence and general Welfare of the United States; but all Duties, Imposts and Excises shall be uniform throughout the United States;

To borrow Money on the credit of the United States;

To regulate Commerce with foreign Nations, and among the several States, and with the Indian Tribes;

To establish an uniform Rule of Naturalization, and uniform Laws on the subject of Bankruptcies throughout the United States;

To coin Money, regulate the Value thereof, and of foreign Coin, and fix the Standard of Weights and Measures;

To provide for the Punishment of counterfeiting the Securities and current Coin of the United States;

To establish Post Offices and post Roads;

To promote the Progress of Science and useful Arts, by securing for limited Times to Authors and Inventors the exclusive Right to their respective Writings and Discoveries;

To constitute Tribunals inferior to the supreme Court;

To define and punish Piracies and Felonies committed on the high Seas, and Offences against the Law of Nations;

To declare War, grant Letters of Marque and Reprisal, and make Rules concerning Captures on Land and Water;

To raise and support Armies, but no Appropriation of Money to that Use shall be for a longer Term than two Years;
To provide and maintain a Navy;

To make Rules for the Government and Regulation of the land and naval Forces;

To provide for calling forth the Militia to execute the Laws of the Union, suppress Insurrections and repel Invasions;

To provide for organizing, arming, and disciplining, the Militia, and for governing such Part of them as may be employed in the Service of the United States, reserving to the States respectively, the Appointment of the Officers, and the Authority of training the Militia according to the discipline prescribed by Congress;

To exercise exclusive Legislation in all Cases whatsoever, over such District (not exceeding ten Miles square) as may, by Cession of particular States, and the Acceptance of Congress, become the Seat of the Government of the United States, and to exercise like Authority over all Places purchased by the Consent of the Legislature of the State in which the Same shall be, for the Erection of Forts, Magazines, Arsenals, dock-Yards, and other needful Buildings;-
-And

To make all Laws which shall be necessary and proper for carrying into Execution the foregoing Powers, and all other Powers vested by this Constitution in the Government of the United States, or in any Department or Officer thereof.

[20120805-12](#)

12:45

SteveB

Re: The Tea Party's Constitutional Issues (reply to SteveG, above) & "So What is The Plan?"

It is confusing trying to understand the minds of the Tea Party. But I think the issue is just that they believe the federal government has usurped the powers and rights of the states.—the powers spelled out in Art. 1, Sect. 8 have been exceeded. They believe the Supreme Court has been derelict in its duties for two centuries by allowing this to happen, though unconstitutional by Art. 1, Sect. 8 and the 10th Amendment.

Here's an interesting article:

"So What is The Plan?" by the Roanoke (Va.) Tea Party, (<http://www.roanoketeparty.com/pages/so-what-is-the-plan/>)

20120805-16 14:15 SteveG Re: The Tea Party's Constitutional Issues (reply to SteveB, above)

I understand that the right thinks that Article 8 Section 1 has been exceed, but I do not understand where or how and have not heard specifics We tried the Articles of Confederation and they didn't work, specifically how has the government usurped the powers of the states – that is what I don't understand.

20120805-17 15:00 Art Re: The Tea Party's Constitutional Issues (reply to SteveG, above)

I've never seen enough coherent thought from the tea party to know what they want, except that Ni**er out of the White House.

20120805-18 15:37 SteveG Re: The Tea Party's Constitutional Issues (reply to Art, above)

True.

20120805-19 16:08 SteveB Re: The Tea Party's Constitutional Issues (reply to SteveG, above)

I guess another way of stating the same question would be to ask why they consider President Obama to be a total communist, though most of us have trouble looking past his kow-towing to the bankers and big money, way too similar to the Republicans.

I know Obamacare must be one of these transgressions! Even though the Tea Party's beloved Constitution, as interpreted by their own Supreme Court, declared it the law of the land.

Other than that, I guess he's black.

And I remember one thing. When Bush was President and the country was going to hell and the whole world could clearly see it (they contemptuously called him "W"), the Right had no complaints about the Constitution. Except being a little better off economically, what's different now? Nothing, except Mr. Obama has the nerve to sleep in the White House!

20120805-20 16:42 SteveG Re: The Tea Party's Constitutional Issues (reply to SteveB, above)

I think they forget the first sentence of Article 1 Section 8 is "The Congress shall have Power To lay and collect Taxes, Duties, Imposts and Excises, to pay the Debts and provide for the common Defence and the general Welfare of the United States; but all Duties, Imposts and Excises shall be uniform throughout the United States."

With general meaning universal or wide-ranging and welfare safety, well-being or benefit.

20120805-21 17:14 SteveB Re: The Tea Party's Constitutional Issues (reply to SteveG, above)

ep. Yet they claim to believe that, somehow, it is impossible for the federal government to do anything which would benefit the general welfare (except defense, I guess).

I wonder why a state's government would be so much better? Easier to corrupt and control?

They sure don't like being prevented by the feds from pursuing certain hobbies like segregation, cross burning, lynching, abortion doctor killing, etc., etc. Maybe they could get the states to let them get away with this stuff...that's the way it was before Bobby Kennedy and Lyndon Johnson.

20120805-22 17:51 SteveG Re: The Tea Party's Constitutional Issues (reply to SteveB, above)

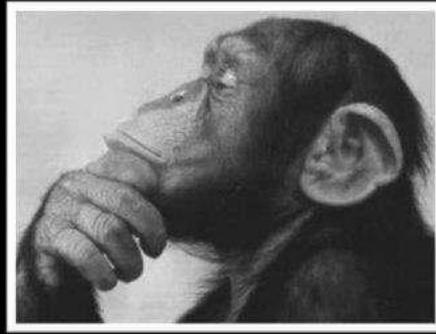
Typically I associated LBJ with the Vietnam War – LBJ how many babies you kill today. I have gone back looked at his legislation, looked at his life growing up in Texas, looked at the influences on his life, and how he grew the knowledge/abilities to run a government – an amazing person. I have also read some of RFK, his influence on JFK and watched a documentary put out by Anderson University about his own campaign and the speech he gave in Indianapolis the night MLK was killed. An amazing person.

Civility has left the building. Sound bites are the rule.

When we were in Indiana – a number of people/families would move from Illinois to Indiana and from Kentucky to Indiana because the rules/benefits for food stamps, TANF, and Medicaid were easier/better. When I retired I had to pay COBRA for a while – Medical coverage and medical care are a lot different from state to state; Medicare is different from state to state; medical insurance is different; car insurance is different. Having 50 to 51 different rules and regulations for the same thing is a little nuts.

We are in an election year and there are a minimum of 50 different rules for how elections are done and within each set of rules there are multitudes of compliance – precinct to precinct.

It is a wonder we are able to exist as a country.



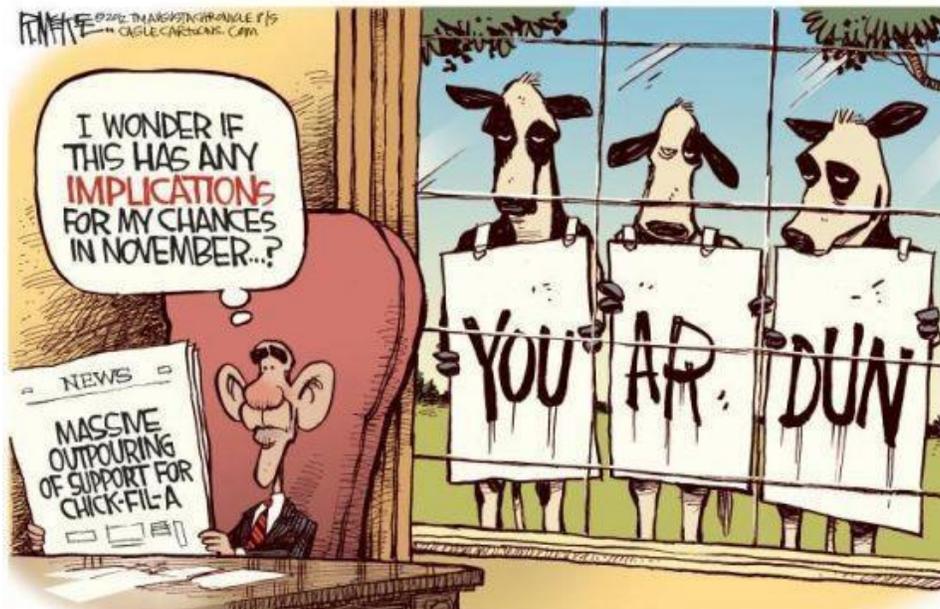
INTELLIGENT

Not because you think you know
everything without questioning, but rather
because you question everything you think
you know.

Picture source: <http://hater.sounds.com/>

Yes, he is done!

[Except you might want to take a look at the article above ("6 Brands Playing Footsie with Conservatives & Paying the Price") to see Chick-fil-A's real loss in business. It looks like a huge price to me. -SteveB]



<http://www.guardian.co.uk/books/gallery/2012/may/28/oceans#/?picture=390786142&index=2>



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

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

<http://www.FriendsOfTheMiddle.org>
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FRIENDS OF THE MIDDLE NEWSLETTER #198 — AUG. 7, 2012

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

INDEX: Click here.

R0mney: 1 + 1 = 3!

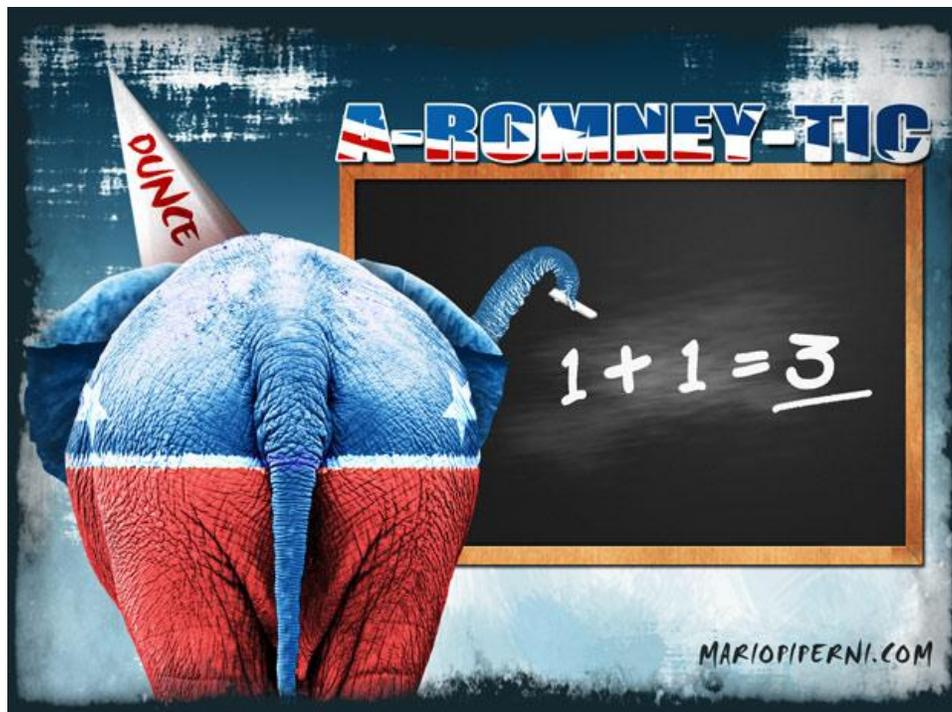
(posted by Steven W. Baker / SteveB, Aug. 7, 2012)

"When Willard isn't busy taking irrevocable stances on both sides of issues, belittling people he considers inferior, insulting commoners, hiding his wealth, etching his sketch, and lying about everything that he uses to support his claim that he is worthy of the Presidency, he's looking for ways to raise YOUR taxes so he can pay less. Unfortunately for him, new analysis of his tax plan proves that is exactly what his plan does." —Politics Plus

"The Romney Tax Hike" by Matthew Yglesias, Slate

Aug. 6, 2012,

http://www.slate.com/articles/business/moneybox/2012/08/mitt_romney_s_middle_class_tax_hike_and_how_he_can_get_out_of_it.html



(How the GOP candidate stumbled into proposing higher taxes on the middle class and how he can get out of it.)

Whatever else happens in American politics, Republicans have one big advantage: They favor low taxes, and people really don't want to pay more taxes. For the past five years, Democrats have countered this by reassuring voters that their plan is to have someone else pay higher taxes. But it's difficult to make this work mathematically and difficult for Democrats to persuade voters that they really mean it. Yet a bombshell report released last week by the Urban-Brookings Tax Policy Center shows that Mitt Romney has given Democrats the greatest gift they could hope for—a Republican plan for a broad increase in middle-class taxes.

What went wrong?

A core conviction of the Republican Party since the election of Ronald Reagan is that lower taxes on high-income individuals is the key to economic growth. This belief has grown especially rigid since the Gipper's departure from the scene. Reagan himself had sufficient credibility with conservatives to cut deals with Democrats on taxes as well as other issues. But George H.W. Bush's decision to sign a budget that raised taxes as the price for getting Democrats to agree to spending cuts was widely denounced as heresy. Following H.W.'s defeat, Bob Dole, George W. Bush, John McCain, and all the 2012 contenders have run on platforms of tax cuts for the rich—an agenda that's been equally pushed by Republican congressional leaders.

The price of this policy has typically been large budget deficits. That's because even though conservatives espouse spending cuts and sometimes even vote for them, they have little interest in letting their tax agenda be held hostage to the difficult political lift of major spending reductions.

"Reagan proved deficits don't matter" was the watchword of George W. Bush-era economic policy. And in political terms, it worked great. Rather than yoking tax cuts for the rich to unpopular, offsetting cutbacks in Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid, they were yoked to a smaller but still meaningful—and politically appealing—reduction in middle-class tax rates.

But then came the great crash of 2008, the inauguration of President Obama, and the 2009 stimulus bill. Ever since, Republicans have embraced the rhetoric of debt reduction with the fervor of converts. High deficits is the aspect of Obama-era economic policy that has the most in common with the policies the past two generations of Republicans have espoused, but the current generation has assailed Obama for it with a breathtaking level of hypocrisy. Then along comes Romney, ever eager to mold himself to whatever is the current fashion in conservatism. How could he enact growth-enhancing reductions in the marginal tax rates paid by high-income individuals without piling on hundreds of billions in new debt?

His plan is simple: Close loopholes and lower rates. "By virtue of doing that," he told campaign donors, "we'll get the same tax revenue, but we'll have lower rates."

It sounds almost too good to be true and, indeed, the Romney campaign has offered few details of exactly what deductions he would eliminate in order to finance his very detailed program of reductions in tax rates. The only specifics he has provided have been about which tax preferences he won't get rid of—the ones that offer preferential tax treatment of investment income.

Fortunately for us, the busy beavers at the Tax Policy Center were able to fill in the details. They were interested in the distributional consequences of Romney-style reform, and they reasoned that the best way to enact it would be to establish a best-case scenario for the middle class. Look at all the tax breaks that are on the table, in other words, and start by eliminating the one that's most favorable to the wealthy. Then take away the second-most-favorable one. Repeat until you've done away with enough tax breaks to pay for Romney's tax cuts. Then run the numbers and see the consequences. What you get turns out to be a substantial decrease in the after-tax incomes of households with less than \$200,000 a year in income, to the tune of 1.2 percent of total income on average. Richer households, by contrast, will pay less in taxes than they do now.

Tax Policy Center:

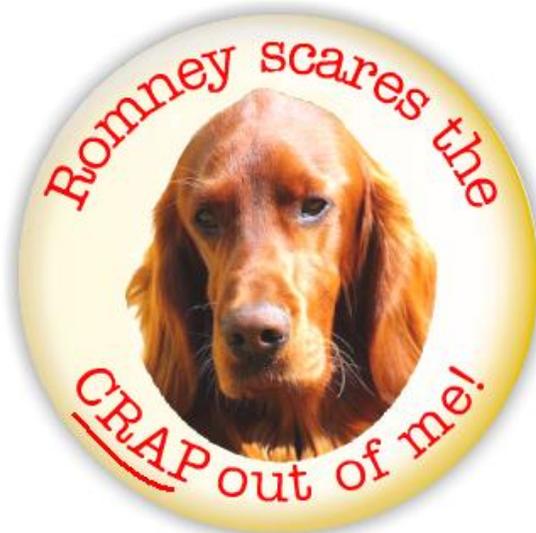
"It is not mathematically possible to design a revenue-neutral plan that preserves current incentives for savings and investment and that does not result in a net tax cut for high-income taxpayers and a net tax increase for lower- and/or middle-income taxpayers," the study concludes.

Even if tax breaks "are eliminated in a way designed to make the resulting tax system as progressive as possible, there would still be a shift in the tax burden of roughly \$86 billion [a year] from those making over \$200,000 to those making less" than that.

What would that mean for the average tax bill? Millionaires would get an \$87,000 tax cut, the study says. But for 95 percent of the population, taxes would go up by about 1.2 percent, an average of \$500 a year.

The issue here isn't so much that the tax breaks Romney would have to close are such great deals for average people. Even things like the home mortgage interest deduction that are frequently touted as middle-class benefits do more to help rich people, who own fancier houses. Indeed, if Romney were to try to pay for these tax cuts through reduced spending, the results would be even more regressive. It's just that the kind of broad tax cuts Romney is proposing are very favorable to high-income families, meaning basically that any way of paying for them would shift income up the ladder. At the moment, the Romney camp is responding to the analysis with sputtering indignation, denouncing it as a "biased study from a former Obama staffer" in reference to co-author Adam Looney's previous experience as a staff economist on the Obama administration's Council of Economic Advisers. These staff roles, however, are not political positions (a young Paul Krugman was a Council of Economic Advisers staff economist during the Reagan administration), and the Tax Policy Center's director, Donald Marron, was an actual political appointee to George W. Bush's Council of Economic Advisers.

If Romney wants to cut taxes on the rich without hurting middle-class pocketbooks, he needs to return to the faith of his GOP forefathers and ask, "What would George W. Bush do?" The answer is simply not to pay for the tax cuts. That would mean admitting that the attacks on Obama-era deficits are bogus. But it would also have the virtue of being true. For all that Democrats mewled about deficits during the Bush years, there's precious little evidence they did the economy any harm. Right now the government can borrow money basically for free, so there's little reason to pay for anything. That wouldn't be my ideal economic stimulus plan, but it's better than doing nothing and certainly better than the middle-class tax hike Romney has backed himself into proposing. But the first step toward improving his proposal would be admitting he has a problem.



A few months ago, a bill was passed by the Utah state legislature to ban sex education in public schools. It was a terrible bill, and the only chance of stopping it was to get the state's Republican governor to veto it.

It seemed like a real long-shot, but a school bus driver named Paul Krueger was outraged and started a petition on MoveOn's website, SignOn.org. Paul's petition spread quickly through Facebook and email and even got the attention of the state's big newspapers and TV stations.

Then, something really amazing happened. After more than 40,000 people signed Paul's petition, the governor announced that he would veto the bill! The tea party was outraged, but because of the public groundswell, the bill was dead.

Now it's your turn. Using SignOn.org, you can start your own online petition and invite your friends to sign it. We'll send the most popular petitions to other MoveOn members to help build support for your cause.

Click here to start your own petition on SignOn.org right now:

http://www.signon.org/create_start.html?source=homepage.

Thanks for all you do. –Steven, Stefanie, Manny, Bobby, and the rest of the team

"Five Adjectives that Scream 'Don't Vote Republican!'" by Paul Buchheit, NationofChange

Aug. 6, 2012, (<http://www.nationofchange.org/five-adjectives-scream-don-t-vote-republican-1344258529>)

There are more than five, of course, and voting Democrat may not be much of an improvement, but attaching these adjectives to the comically contemptible GOP seems more than appropriate.

OBSTRUCTIONIST

In 2010 Mitch McConnell said: "The single most important thing we want to achieve is for President Obama to be a one-term president." He didn't mention the economy, or education, or jobs, or the housing market. Instead, the goal is to beat Obama, whatever misery it might cause 200 million Americans.

For the past two years the Republicans have obstructed proposals that would have helped most Americans. They fought the middle-class tax cut because it would only apply to the first quarter-million of income. They killed a jobs bill that was supported by two-thirds of the public. They rejected a bill to disclose information about big campaign donors. They disrupted the routine process of increasing the debt ceiling, thus triggering the first-ever downgrading of the U.S. credit rating. Most recently they've obstructed efforts to provide mortgage debt relief to American homeowners.

Along the way they found time to obstruct other bills that conflicted with their 'austerity' mentality: a Pay Equity Bill that would have provided greater pay equality for women; a bill to limit student loan rates; a transportation bill that Senator Dick Durbin called one of the "easiest bills to do on Capitol Hill"; a demand for a \$16 million cut in the FAA budget that led to a \$25 million PER DAY shutdown.

Republicans in Congress, by relying on questionable filibuster rules and delay tactics, have built a "road to gridlock" in the halls of our government. They have been even less productive than the "do-nothing" Congress of Harry Truman. As observed by George Lakoff and Elisabeth Wehling, their recalcitrance "disables the government to the point where it can no longer carry out its moral mission -- the protection and empowerment of everyone equally."

And it all makes the Obama Administration look really bad.

VINDICTIVE

Despite obstructing every proposal Obama has sent their way, Republicans have the temerity to pass the blame for Congressional failures onto the President and the Democrats. Most of the criticisms border on the absurd. They accuse him of "class warfare" for proposing to tax incomes over \$1 million. They blame him for failing to avoid reductions in military spending. They accuse him of single-handedly losing the country's AAA credit rating.

The President has even been blamed for "strangling the economy" in Ohio when federal labor statistics show that the state's unemployment rate has declined since Obama took office. And, as U.S. corporations abandon job-seeking Americans, Obama is somehow tagged with the title of "outsourcer-in-chief."

The venom is directed not only at political opponents, but also at the public. Social security, a popular and well-run program, is constantly targeted for cuts. Medicare, just as popular, is also threatened, even though private insurance administrative costs are three times higher. The U.S. Post Office was directly assaulted by the 2006 Republican Congress with a ludicrous demand for 75 years of pre-funded retirement plans.

When Republicans run out of spite and accusations, they turn to ambiguities, which allow insults to be fashioned for no particular reason. Mitt Romney blasted Obama's policies for creating "more uncertainty." House Speaker John Boehner lamented the "economic uncertainty that is destroying jobs." House Majority Leader Eric Cantor referred to the "cloud of uncertainty" hanging over small and large employers."

DELUSIONAL

Republicans have persisted in their 30-year delusion that tax cuts for the rich stimulate the economy and the job market. It is simply not true. Research by Piketty and Saez and Stantcheva confirms that there is a direct relationship between reduced tax rates and higher incomes, and that there is no relationship between tax cuts and GDP growth. As for the claim by Orrin Hatch that a tax increase on top earners would hurt small business, a recent Treasury analysis found that only 2.5% of small businesses would face higher taxes from the expiration of the Bush tax cuts.

The image of wealthy job creators is also an illusion. Over 90% of the assets owned by millionaires are held in a combination of low-risk investments (bonds and cash), the stock market, real estate, and personal business accounts. The Wall Street Journal admitted that the extra wealth created by the Bush tax cuts led to the "worst track record for jobs in recorded history."

The GOP "tax cut" plan would save tens of millions of dollars for billionaires. This when the richest 1% took 93 percent of all the new income in the first year after the recession, and when at least \$20 trillion -- more than the U.S. GDP -- is stashed away tax-free in offshore tax havens by Ultra High Net Worth Individuals, most of them Americans.

As part of their delusion, Republicans have emphasized the need for austerity measures, including an end to the Child Tax Credit, the Earned Income Tax Credit, and the tax break on college tuition. Not a single Republican voted to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to provide tax relief to middle-class families.

All this when the child poverty rate in the U.S. has climbed to record levels, leaving us ahead of only Romania for last place among industrialized countries. And when we have 30 million long-term unemployed Americans, 50 million without health insurance, and 50 million on food stamps.

Evidence bursts the balloon filled with Republican hot air. In a survey of leading economists conducted by the University of Chicago's Booth School of Business, 92 percent agreed that the stimulus succeeded in reducing the jobless rate. Not a single economist believed that cutting taxes will lead to higher government revenue.

Instead, reputable studies have found that investing in health care or education will create jobs, and that increasing the minimum wage will stimulate consumer spending.

But the delusional Congressmen don't listen to the middle class anymore. A Princeton study concluded that "Senators appear to be considerably more responsive to the opinions of affluent constituents than to the opinions of middle-class constituents...Disparities in representation are especially pronounced for Republican senators."

HYPOCRITICAL

Hypocrisy has run rampant among Republicans, starting with their rejection of economic stimulus programs like the one they supported just four years ago. They reversed themselves on the individual mandate, which enjoyed widespread Republican support until Obama endorsed it. They dismissed the payroll tax cut that cuts the taxes they so despise. As noted earlier, they balked at the raising of the debt ceiling, even though it had been raised by Republicans many times before. They demand budget cuts to reduce the deficit while refusing to touch the bloated military budget. They condemn public education while insisting that every individual has an equal opportunity to succeed. They support prison privatization programs that are, according to the Orlando Sentinel, "prime financiers of the Republican party."

Hypocrisy oozes from the pork that survives the Republicans' public demands for fiscal discipline. It flows from the criticism of unions for campaign spending, even though the Center for Responsive Politics estimates that only 2.7 percent of contributions came from labor unions and individuals representing labor organizations. And it reaches a shameful peak in the appeal for 'integrity' in elections through a Voter ID Act, which could eliminate the vote of millions of lower-income Americans.

Finally, the most common note of hypocrisy from Republicans: their call for lower tax rates coupled with a removal of loopholes. Can it work? A Johns Hopkins study suggests not, determining that Republican CEOs show a significantly higher level of tax avoidance than do companies run by CEOs with no clear political preference.

INEPT

Our do-nothing Republicans are like children pouting until they get their candy. Congressional experts Thomas Mann and Norm Ornstein say "We have been studying Washington politics and Congress for more than 40 years, and never have we seen them this dysfunctional."

On all counts of economic growth, progress is stifled by Republican ineptitude and inertia. Bloomberg reports that Democrats over the years have created more private-sector jobs, stimulated the markets to a greater degree, and presided over faster GDP growth.

Republicans are outrageously unpopular. A Gallup Poll registered a 10% approval rating, less than pornography, communism, and BP during the oil spill.

And unless, as suggested earlier, they're playing dumb as an obstructionist tactic, they're lacking in intelligence, as evidenced by their stand on climate change. Global warming is universally recognized as a problem caused by humans. Except by Republicans. With their passion for individual rights, conservatives deny any fact that implies a failure in the free-market system. If global warming turns out to be true, excuses are being lined up, like this one from the U.S. Chamber of Commerce: "Populations can acclimatize to warmer climates via a range of behavioral, physiological and technological adaptations."

Cognitive dissonance strengthens erroneous beliefs in the presence of factual evidence. Thus the House of Representatives has voted over 100 times since 2011 to subsidize the oil and gas industry while weakening environmental, public health, and safety requirements. As summarized by Republican Senator James Inhofe, "God's still up there. The arrogance of people to think that we, human beings, would be able to change what He is doing in the climate is to me outrageous."

Adds Republican Representative David Schweikert: "You have the right as an American to be dumb."

A WORD ABOUT THE DEMOCRATS

"Impotent" comes to mind. The *New York Times* commented that "Many voters prefer the policies of Democrats to the policies of Republicans. They just don't trust the Democrats to carry out those promises."

But Americans, at the very least, deserve political representatives who won't stand in the way of national improvement simply for the purpose of making their opponent a one-term President.

20120806-04	12:05	SteveB	From the Right: "Five Reasons Republicans Can Win the Tax Fight"
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"Five Reasons Republicans Can Win the Tax Fight" by David Harsanyi, *Human Events*

Aug. 6, 2012, (<http://www.humanevents.com/2012/08/06/harsanyi-five-ways-republicans-can-win-the-tax-fight/>)

Economic catastrophe might be looming, but that's not going to stop Washington from doing what it does best: politics. Last week, the Republican-led House passed a bill extending all Bush-era tax cuts set to lapse at the year-end. A few days before that, Senate Democrats passed their own bill raising tax rates on the wealthy and preserving the rest of the cuts. Both were merely symbolic, purely political and plenty cynical.

And so the battle over taxes has seen much maneuvering but absolutely no movement. It's a dangerous game of chicken, as most economists have warned that a failure by Congress to act could undo any of the economic "recovery" we're barely clinging to these days. Marginal income-tax rates and capital gains would jump, dividends would be taxed as income—and that's just for starters. This state of affairs seems to satisfy both sides because they both believe the broader narrative over the tax fight—the ideological case—needs to be won.

The battle lines are simple: Barack Obama supports allowing lower tax rates for those making above \$200,000 a year and \$250,000 for couples to expire, allowing him to attack Republicans as coddlers of plutocrats and Mitt Romney as a candidate of self-interest. Romney supports continuing the tax rates for all income levels and, moreover, he has added the promise of further across-the-board tax cuts.

Whatever happens in November, this is a fight, for a number of reasons that Republicans can win.

1. Democrats Are Overestimating

The left often points to the many polls illustrating that Americans support raising taxes on rich Americans. There is no denying it. But what does that mean in substance? Polls that ask a "yes or no" question without context can only tell us so much. Take, for example, presidential approval ratings: The important question isn't "do you like the president?" but rather "do you like him less or more than the other guy?"

And in a new Gallup poll, Americans were asked to prioritize the president's agenda. Respondents assigned exceptionally little importance to increasing taxes on the wealthy—so little, in fact, that when given a choice, voters placed it last among all available choices, tied with expanding global warming policy. The top three were: "creating good jobs" (92 percent), "reducing corruption in federal government" (87 percent) and "reducing the federal budget deficit" (86 percent).

So if the Gallup poll truly reflects the mindset of Americans, it's curious that Democrats made a tax increase the centerpiece of their attack. The notion that around \$50 billion of added tax revenue a year, the increase it's expected to generate, would fix the economy, reduce the deficit or create "good jobs" or deal with any of the top prioritized agenda items, seems like a weak central argument for the Democratic Party to make.

2. Voters Are in the Mood to Say 'No'

When Americans do get a direct say on the topic, they've consistently been saying "no." While tax hikes on the wealthy, despite the potential economic consequences, might appeal to our innate affection for "fairness" (though voters often fail to understand how much the wealthy already pay), voters have been increasingly reluctant to give in.

People will tell pollsters all kinds of things, of course, but since the recent recession began, many state, county and city initiatives that proposed tapping new revenue streams have lost—and often lost badly. A proposed transportation sales tax in Georgia, for instance, was clobbered last week, and it is one in a very long line of tax-hike efforts batted down by voters from Oregon to New York.

Put it this way: In June, an initiative to levy a new tax on cigarettes to pay for cancer research in California failed. The only thing that could make that initiative more appealing to voters would be to throw in a free kitten. Yet, it was rejected.

3. Deal with the Consequences

Sen. Patty Murray (D-Wash.), leading the tax fight for Democrats in the Senate, has stated that unless Republicans concede to hike taxes on the rich, her party would not enter into any compromise that could delay either automatic spending cuts or tax increases.

Voters may remember that this is the same tough-talking Democratic-controlled Senate hasn't passed a budget since April 29, 2009. Yet, here, for a tax increase on the wealthy, it is willing to risk a second recession. Voters may also remember that Democrats controlled the House in 2008 when they passed a full extension of the Bush-era tax cuts, because, as an assortment of Democrats pointed out, it was a bad idea to raise taxes during a downturn.

At a press breakfast in Washington hosted by the *Christian Science Monitor*, Republican Majority Whip Kevin McCarthy of California pointed out that there are 139 Democrats in the House who voted to extend all tax cuts and "86 of those Democrats still reside in the House...If we're serious about changing this economy and making America competitive yet, eliminate some of the uncertainty yet. You extend [tax cuts] and reform the entire tax code—that unshackles us and lets us compete."

That's a compelling argument that is going to be hard for Democrats to match. In the end, it is Democrats who created the ultimatum and people who create ultimatums typically bear the brunt of the fallout. A study by Ernst and Young found that raising taxes on the rich would cost the economy around 710,000 jobs. Few reputable economists argue that a tax increase could help create any private sector jobs—the kind of "good jobs" that Americans value.

So the onus will be on the Democrats to convince independents that this is a hill worth dying on. While, conversely, the GOP is arguing for the status quo—a tax rate that has been in place for 10 years.

4. Not Just the Wealthy

While President Barack Obama will continue to argue that the tax hikes aim at billionaires and millionaires who aren't doing their "fair share," more and more voters will learn that it's a far broader proposition.

Sen. Charles Schumer (D-N.Y.) and House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.), arguably two of the highest profile Democrats in Washington, both favored raising the threshold of tax on the wealthy to \$1 million rather than the \$200,000 range. If stalwart liberals are wobbly on this issue, one can imagine the average independent might not buy it either.

Sen. John Thune (R-S.D.) told *Human Events* that taxing the rich entails raising taxes "on almost a million small businesses. More than 50 percent of all [small businesses] that passed through income would face higher taxes and those almost one million small businesses who would be hit with higher taxes employ almost 20 percent of the American workforce."

Thune is talking about many small and mid-sized businesses that, to avoid double taxation are either sub-chapter S corporations or limited liability corporations. Obama will, at some point, have to make the case that small business owners should pay more in taxes—no doubt, an unsavory position to be in.

5. History with the Republicans

History doesn't always repeat itself, but, fact is, no post WWII presidential candidate has won the election while making the focus of his campaign the promise of raising taxes.

[20120806-03](#) 12:03 SteveB Bolivia's Birthday

Today is Bolivia's 189th (I think) birthday (our July 4th).

The Google Doodle today celebrates that fact:



[20120806-05](#) 12:27 Ann Re: Bolivia's Birthday (reply to SteveB, above)

Wow! Hope you have a celebration.

[20120806-06](#) 13:21 Art Re: Bolivia's Birthday (reply to SteveB, above)

Happy Birthday Bolivia!!!!!!!

[20120806-07](#) 16:05 SteveG Puns

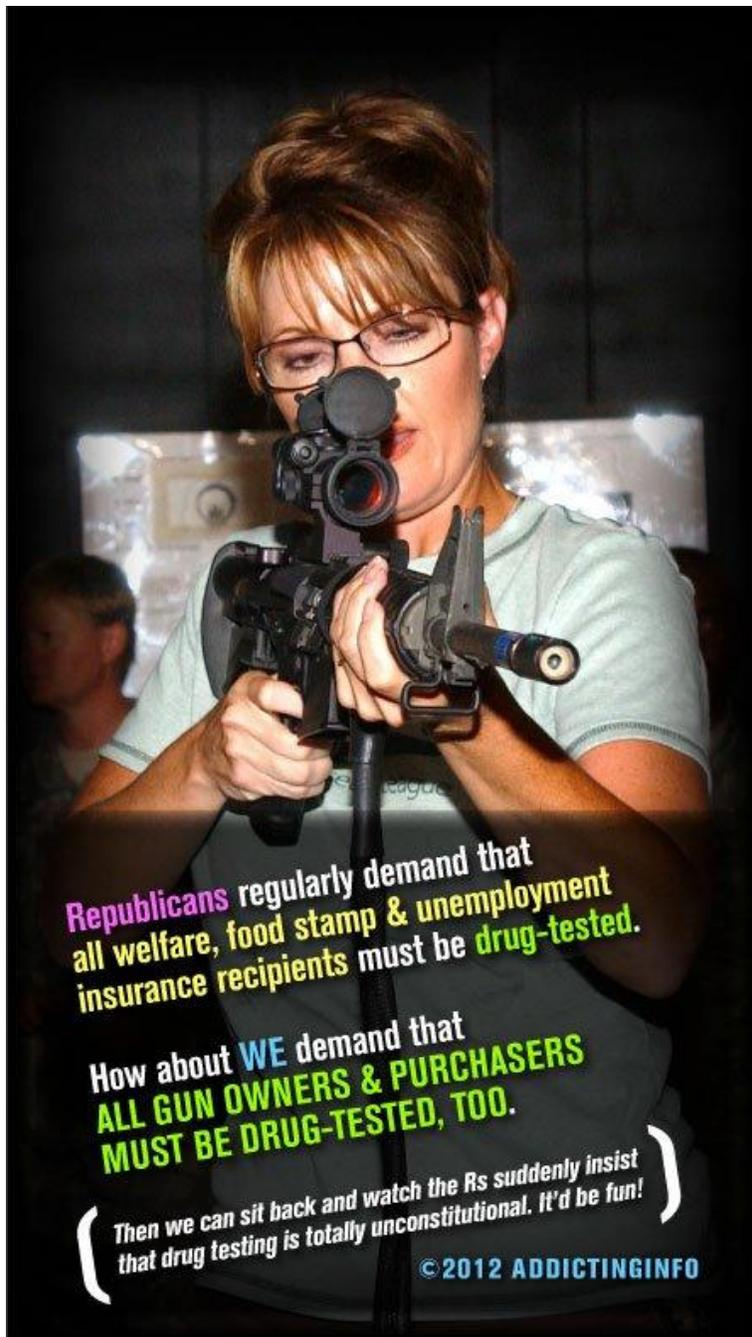
1. The fattest knight at King Arthur's round table was Sir Cumference. He acquired his size from too much pi.
2. I thought I saw an eye doctor on an Alaskan island, but it turned out to be an optical Aleutian.
3. She was only a whiskey maker, but he loved her still.
4. A rubber band pistol was confiscated from algebra class, because it was a weapon of math disruption.
5. No matter how much you push the envelope, it'll still be stationery.
6. A dog gave birth to puppies near the road and was cited for littering.
7. A grenade thrown into a kitchen in France would result in Linoleum blown apart.
8. Two silk worms had a race. They ended up in a tie.
9. A hole has been found in the nudist camp wall. The police are looking into it.
10. Time flies like an arrow. Fruit flies like a banana.
11. Atheism is a non-prophet organization.
12. Two hats were hanging on a hat rack in the hallway. One hat said to the other: 'You stay here; I'll go on a head.'

13. I wondered why the baseball kept getting bigger. Then it hit me.
14. A sign on the lawn at a drug rehab center said: 'Keep off the Grass.'
15. The midget fortune-teller who escaped from prison was a small medium at large.
16. The soldier who survived mustard gas and pepper spray is now a seasoned veteran.
17. A backward poet writes inverse.
18. In a democracy it's your vote that counts. In feudalism it's your count that votes.
19. When cannibals ate a missionary, they got a taste of religion.
20. If you jumped off the bridge in Paris, you'd be in Seine.
21. A vulture boards an airplane, carrying two dead raccoons.. The stewardess looks at him and says, 'I'm sorry, sir, only one carrion allowed per passenger.'
22. Two fish swim into a concrete wall. One turns to the other and says 'Dam!'
23. Two Eskimos sitting in a kayak were chilly, so they lit a fire in the craft. Unsurprisingly it sank, proving once again that you can't have your kayak and heat it too.
24. Two hydrogen atoms meet. One says, 'I've lost my electron.' The other says 'Are you sure?' The first replies, 'Yes, I'm positive.'
25. Did you hear about the Buddhist who refused Novocain during a root canal? His goal: transcend dental medication.
26. There was the person who sent ten puns to friends, with the hope that at least one of the puns would make them laugh. No pun in ten did.

20120806-08	17:34	Art	Video: British Defense Planning
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<http://po.st/V72zyj>





Republicans regularly demand that all welfare, food stamp & unemployment insurance recipients must be drug-tested.

How about WE demand that ALL GUN OWNERS & PURCHASERS MUST BE DRUG-TESTED, TOO.

Then we can sit back and watch the Rs suddenly insist that drug testing is totally unconstitutional. It'd be fun!

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<http://savenaturesavehuman.blogspot.com/2012/04/keel-billed-toucan.html>



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

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

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FRIENDS OF THE MIDDLE NEWSLETTER #199 — AUG. 8, 2012

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

INDEX: Click here.

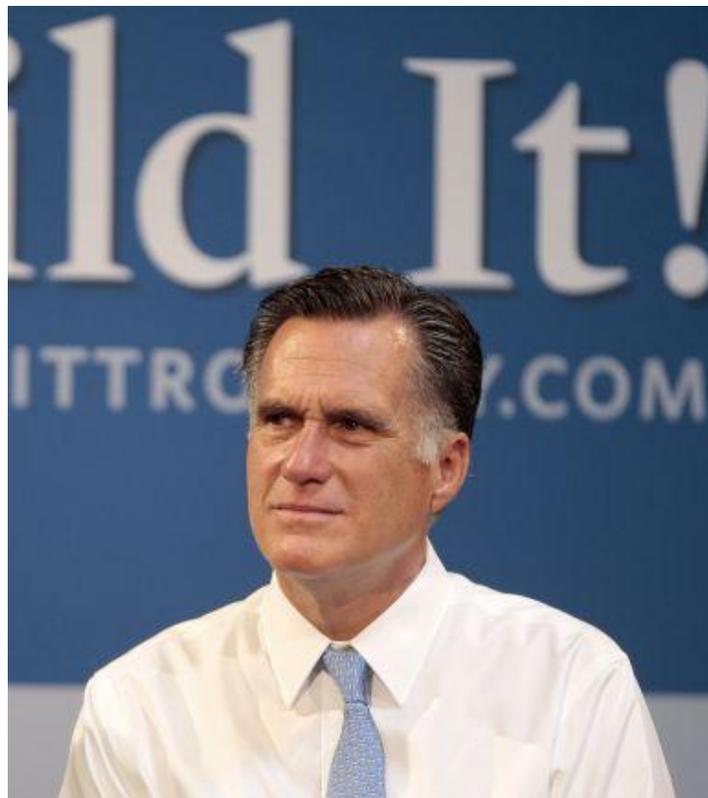
The 'Shapeshifter'

(posted by Steven W. Baker / SteveB, Aug. 8, 2012)

Geez...and we haven't even gotten to the Mormon cult thing yet...

"The Talented Mr. Romney" by Richard Eskow, Huffington Post

Aug. 7, 2012, (http://www.huffingtonpost.com/rj-eskow/the-talented-mr-romney_b_1750073.html?utm_hp_ref=politics)



Put up or shut up! Mitt: "This is just one more front that I think is a very unfortunate and sad course."
(http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/08/07/mitt-romney-harry-reid-tax_n_1753082.html)

We tend to over-emphasize personalities in our politics especially in presidential campaigns. It matters who's president, of course, but our national elections are the product of much larger economic and social forces. They're increasingly dominated by a few financial powerhouses, and those who win them are then subjected to the intense gravitational pull of economic forces before even taking office.

The individuals running for president should be seen as the symptoms, as well as the causes, of larger events. Obama the Candidate was the product of social and economic yearnings which he shrewdly exploited. Bush the Candidate used larger forces in a shrewd way, too. He won and kept office by cleverly manipulating the corporate media, and by exploiting a network of relationships that extended from the boardrooms of Corporate America to the cloakroom of the United States Supreme Court.

To get lost in personalities during campaign season is to reduce all our elections to the presidential race and the presidential race to a reality show: America's Next Top President.

Having said all that: Man, can you believe that Mitt Romney?

What does it say about this moment in history that an individual with no discernible core is the GOP candidate? Not that the man is evil or hateful. Romney's lack of a self has led to the striking absence of even these qualities. Dick Cheney had a genuine, old school, castle-on-a-stormy-night-with-lightning-flashes kind of darkness. So did Dick Nixon. Mitt Romney just... *really, really wants the job.*

In that sense Romney resembles no historical or fictional figure in recent memory more than Tom Ripley, the protagonist of Patricia Highsmith's detective novel *The Talented Mr. Ripley* (played by Matt Damon in the movie). While the plots of the book and movie are somewhat different, both the literary and cinematic Ripleys had one quality in common: While he did very bad things -- cheating, lying, even killing -- Ripley never seemed like a particularly bad person. He just really wanted to *be* somebody.

Of course, Mitt Romney's never killed anyone (that we know of, anyway -- but that's true of everyone, isn't it?) He did brutalize that kid who dyed his hair in high school. You could argue that this incident happened so long that it doesn't cast much light on Romney's personality.

But Romney's reaction to the story happened in the present, and what was striking was his absolute lack of remorse when it came to light that the young man in question had been devastated by the experience. His reaction was eerily detached, even disinterested, as the suffering he had caused was revealed to him. He was cold and detached about it, like, like ...

... well, like a Patricia Highsmith character.

Romney's "European" trip was an oddly detached masquerade, too. His only stops on (or near) that continent were in Great Britain, a nation that's been struggling for many years to decide how "European" it wants to become, and Poland, which has only recently returned from decades spent outside the Europe of Western economics and Western imagination.

There's a reason for that, of course: Like Ripley stepping over a victim's corpse, Romney was stepping over the smoldering ruins of a continent devastated by the economic interests and philosophy which he represents. Whatever you do, *don't open that door!*

But that begs the question: Why make a big display of going to Europe only to skip over it like a flat shiny stone across a muddy lake? Because, like Tom Ripley, Romney is *all about appearances*. He wanted to *appear* like a statesman, *appear* like he was taking a European trip, *appear* like a President-to-be on an international mission.

Appearances were so much more importance than reality on this trip that it wasn't just irrelevant what Romney did or said. It was even irrelevant where he did or said it.

It could have been worse. Romney could have taken the advice that John Cochrane gave the *National Journal*. Cochrane, the *Journal* observes, is a "prominent supply-side economist at the University of Chicago." (Is there any other kind of economist at the University of Chicago?) Cochrane told the *Journal* that Europe needed a dose of "shock liberalization" and "more explicit free-market statements from Mr. Romney."

"Shock liberalization" and "explicit free-market" policies are exactly what Europe's been getting for the past several years, and they're destroying its economy. But Romney didn't even bother making that argument, because he's not an ideologue at heart. He's not *anything* at heart. He's just a poser.

That explains the Israel portion of Romney's trip, the one where he made the worst kind of gaffe a politician of his stripe can make: telling the truth. He praised the Israelis for managing their health economy so efficiently: "You spend eight percent of GDP on health care. You're a pretty healthy nation... Our gap with Israel is 10 points of GDP." It was promptly noted that Romney was embracing a highly socialized system.

What went wrong? As always, Romney was in "pander mode." He knew he was in Israel to pander to Sheldon Adelson, and to a few other billionaire funders and influential ideologues politically aligned with the Israeli Right. His flattering words about Israel's health care system were intended to please them, that's all. Romney didn't make this gaffe because he was "off script": He made it because he was on a *different* script.

That's how it goes in the Highsmith-like world of Mitt Romney. Sometimes one pose conflicts with another. Remember the shipboard scenes in *The Talented Mr. Ripley*? In fiction, these are moments of high tension. Oddly enough, in real-life politics nobody seems to care anymore.

Even Romney's Bain Capital experience had that Ripley flavor. Bain would swoop in on a company, pretend to be its friend and rescuer, then pick it clean and leave the remains for the crows. Then there was the matter of Romney's involvement with a company whose president, along with other employees, defrauded Medicare on a blood test scam. Romney wasn't accused of wrongdoing, but he did work alongside that president before promoting him into the top spot. And the business magazine *Forbes* confirms that he was a hands-on supervisor.

In one of life's little synchronicities, the company in question was called the Damon Corporation.

Tom Ripley's modus operandi was to work his way into your life as a trusted friend with no discernible identity or wishes of his own. Then, when you least expected it, he took everything you had. He took your life, in both senses of the word. What was once yours became his, including your identity, and you were no more.

Remember when Romney released his "59 page economic plan" to great fanfare last December? No? Neither do most people. But I do. I must admit I didn't understand Romney's personality back then like I do now. But what was striking at the time, and what seems even more striking now, is how carefully it was packaged to look like something it wasn't. What seemed conspicuous, in a foreshadowing of Ripleyesque moments to come, was the contrast between its utter economic vacuity and the great care given to the choice of typeface, its layout, and the design of its (meaningless) graphs.

Tom Ripley wore a Princeton jacket to play piano at a private party, even though he'd never gone to school there. That got him a job searching for a Princeton graduate in Europe, whose identity he eventually assumed. For Ripley the key to happiness was always *looking like somebody who mattered*. Appearances meant everything. Content meant nothing.

That also happens to be a good description of the Romney "jobs plan."

Economists are pressing Romney to explain how his plan works because the numbers don't add up. They don't know they're living in a unsettling mystery novel where *nothing* adds up. Other economists are staggered by the fact that Romney's tax plan would cut taxes for the richest among us while actually raising them for the 95 percent of Americans who aren't wealthy. The average American earning less than \$200,000 would get a tax hike of \$2,000, while the wealthiest 0.1 percent would get an average tax *cut* of nearly a quarter of a million dollars.

Who has the audacity to attempt a deception that big, that bold, that obvious? Who thinks they could get away with something like that? Tom Ripley, that's who. Romney's plan takes everybody else's money and gives it to ultra-rich people like himself. Remember: *What was once yours becomes his...*

Romney doesn't even have to persuade very many people that he's the real thing. Like a piano player in a Princeton jacket, he performs for a private and very exclusive audience. *Mother Jones* summarizes some fine work (with compelling graphs — <http://www.motherjones.com/politics/2012/08/super-pac-dark-money-charts-sheldon-adelson-demos>) from Demos and USPIRG to show that 94 percent of all Super-PAC donations in this election cycle came from just over 1,000 people. They could gather comfortably for a croquet party at an estate in Greenwich or Newport.

And 57 percent of all individual Super-PAC donations came from just 47 people who each gave \$1 million or more, which includes the real money being given out by Adelson and the Koch Brothers. That group could fit comfortably in a parlor while Romney -- we mean *Ripley* -- played "Roll Out the Barrel" on the hostess' baby grand.

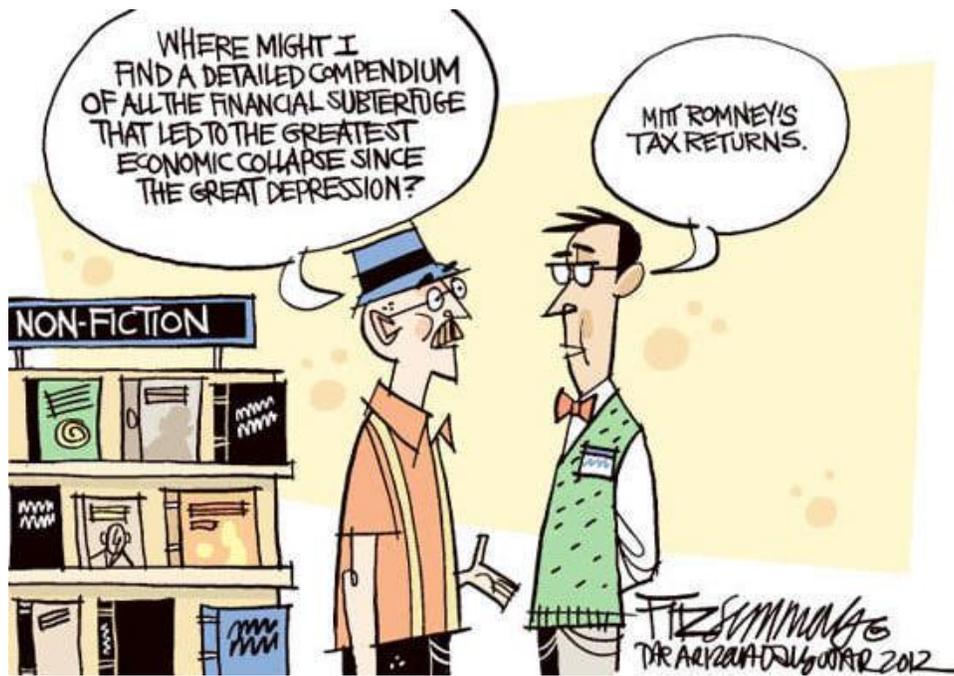
What does it say about our country that Mitt Romney is heading up the GOP ticket? Nobody in his own party seems to like him. Nobody outside his party, except some political insiders, seem to dislike him very much either. He's just there -- ingratiating himself, making himself useful, and always always always looking for the next opportunity.

Who is Mitt Romney? Let him into your life and you'll regret it. Before you know it your life will become *his* life.

Who is Mitt Romney? He's a public figure for whom, as Gertrude Stein said of Oakland, there's no "there" there. He's a shape-shifter, an identity hijacker, a human being who would rather *appear to be* than actually *be*. He's the living incarnation of the self-seeking, ethos-free, "always be closing" vacuousness of the hedge fund set. He's the Golem of Grosse Pointe, the Dybbuk of Darien, the animated spirit of vacuous wealth. He is soulless and amiably amoral ambition made flesh as a candidate for the highest office in the land.

Who is Mitt Romney? Don't bother turning the page because you already know the answer.

Who is Mitt Romney? He's Tom Ripley. And if he wants to be and you let him, someday he'll be *you*.



"Obama's Success Schizophrenia" by Jon Kraushar, Fox 'News'

Aug. 6, 2012, (<http://www.foxnews.com/opinion/2012/08/06/obamas-success-schizophrenia/>)

Ever notice how selective President Obama is when he bashes success?

He implies that many wealthy peoples' success makes them greedy—that they don't pay their "fair share" in taxes. Yet he milks them for campaign contributions.

He insults the success of small business owners, saying, "If you've got a business, you didn't build that. Somebody else made that happen." Yet he leans on small business owners to build jobs and the economy (which would help his re-election).

A recent cartoon by Steve Kelley of the *New Orleans Times-Picayune* puts a twist on Obama's success schizophrenia. The cartoon's headline is "Why it's best that the president isn't going to the London Olympics." It shows three athletes on the Olympic victory stand as Obama says to them, "You didn't win that."

While the cartoon mocks the president, it actually underestimates the cynical way Obama manipulates the success of others. In fact, he would never talk to athletes that way.

Obama only lauds success when it benefits him. When Hollywood or Wall Street showers its wealth on him or when American athletes win Olympic medals or championships, the president gushes. At those times, he is intoxicated by success and loves how its perfume rubs off on him, politically.

When it comes to success, our president is a taker, not a maker.

However, when he can use personal success to incite the resentment and envy he believes he needs to win re-election, the president relishes bashing success. Thus, arguing for higher taxes on financially successful people, Obama has said, "If you've been successful, you didn't get there on your own. I'm always struck by people who think, well, it must be because I was just so smart. There are a lot of smart people out there. It must be because I worked harder than everybody else. Let me tell you something. There are a whole bunch of hard working people out there. If you were successful, somebody along the line gave you some help."

The president's suggestion that success derives from something other than personal effort is missing when he enthuses about sports and athletes. He doesn't demean the smarts and hard work of athletes by saying that other people are also smart and work hard. He doesn't make athletes feel less accomplished because coaches and parents (among others) helped them. He doesn't rip athletes for becoming super-rich because of their talents. He doesn't accuse jocks of lying, cheating and stealing as they rose to the top. He doesn't question the meritocracy of sports. He doesn't recommend bending the high performance standards of sports to include the less successful under a diversity quota. He doesn't diminish the personal achievements of athletes by calling them "lucky" or "fortunate." And he doesn't claim that all sports success is an outgrowth of big government (yet).

But the president will demonize successful business people—including his opponent, Mitt Romney—in all those ways. He doesn't attack athletes for their success because he loves to bask in their reflected glory. He attacks business people because fomenting resentment of their success—particularly their wealth—distracts from his own lack of success with the economy and job creation.

Among the most successful business people—or most successful athletes—only a minority deserve to be reproached for playing unfair because they've committed an actual crime or crossed an ethical line and cashed in on it. But Obama exposes the distortions of his demagoguery when he fails to make such distinctions.

It's sad that Obama resorts to tarring so many business people as villains while cozying up to athletes and trying to ride on their heroics. It's sad because the president himself has never been a real success in business or sports. But he feels free to denigrate or appropriate the success of others to divide or unite voters.

When it comes to success, Obama is a taker, not a maker.

For Obama, nothing succeeds like success—when he believes he can exploit others' success for his own success.

20120807-02 11:55 SteveB Re: "Obama's Success Schizophrenia" (reply to SteveM, above)

LOL! I believe the President "resorts to tarring so many business people as villains" **because they are villains!**

"Exploit[ing] others' success for his own success" **is a statement that makes no sense at all.**

Your article is full of falsehoods.

Romney has said pretty much the same thing Mr. Obama said, just in a slightly different context...

"Without question, we simply could not host Games in Salt Lake if it were not for the enormous spending and services of the federal government," Romney had said in a 2001 testimony before the Senate Judiciary Committee during a hearing around cooperation between federal, state, local and private agencies for the Salt Lake City Olympics. (http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/08/06/mitt-romney-olympics_n_1748235.html?utm_hp_ref=politics).

20120807-03 12:19 SteveM "2012: America's Last Free Election?" (Parts 1-3)

"2012: America's Last Free Election?" (Part 1) by Wes Vernon, RenewAmerica

July 16, 2012, (<http://www.renewamerica.com/columns/vernon/120716>)

A movie is about to be released that portrays what America will be like in 2016 if Barack Obama is re-elected. Will the presidential race of that year have all the credibility of a Hugo Chavez election in Venezuela? In the event Obama does get a second term, will his likely continued reach for ever-more power in the White House result in a gush of protests? And if so, how would those protests be handled by government? By a double-down on repression?

Where we stand now

America has faced threats to its continued existence many times in the past. We have always pulled through — sometimes imperfectly — but always in a manner by which we could survive.

At stake

One would be hard pressed to find a time when this nation did not face threats of either A — enemy attacks on the homeland; or B — armed insurrection on our own soil; or C — a second civil war; or D — Orwellian-style controls on our society; or E — an economic collapse dwarfing the Great Depression; or F — a combination of the above.

Now in 2012, we are at a juncture where all of these nightmare scenarios loom at once in what — coordinated or not — has the appearances of a vast pincer movement. Powerful forces intend to use any or all of them as leverage for the establishment of a one-world socialist society as the globe slips into darkness to which there is no recourse. It would be Orwell on steroids

In short, we face the prospect of, at best, the end of America "as we know it" — or at worst, and with the advent of modern weaponry, the literal end of America, period.

Surrounding us

We are all aware, of course, that the Islamic fundamentalist regime in Iran — despite protestations that its nuclear program is "peaceful" — will nonetheless have the ability to unleash atomic warfare on American interests overseas and our allies (read Israel).

Within our borders, Iran's terror network is preparing for our demise as well. Over a period of years, that regime of violence and hate has placed more than 40,000 of its agents in Bolivia, Brazil, Guatemala, Nicaragua, Ecuador, and Venezuela.

You will notice these are all Latin American countries. The torturers, interrogators, and security agents amongst these Iranian agents (according to a former CIA spy working with the Iranian Revolutionary Guard who spoke to *WorldNet Daily*) can get to the U.S through Mexico. Given that President Obama has made our already-porous southern border even more of a joke, these agents should be in place to kill as many Americans as possible when the attack order comes.

At that point, the foreign invaders will find outpost sleeper cells, already operating throughout the United States, well-prepared to coordinate (likely) simultaneous attacks, the aim of which is to bring America to its knees. Shooting Western passenger airliners out of the sky in the event of an Israeli attack on Iran's nuclear facilities is only one option reportedly, according to intelligence sources. Presumably, that is one of many assignments for some of those 40,000-plus "sleeper" agents here.

Not incidentally

This column has repeatedly called attention to the alliance of Radical Islam and Communists (or what former "Red Diaper baby" David Horowitz calls "the Hate America Left").

In a few days (Thursday July 19), America's Survival, Inc., will hear from Konstantin Preobrazhensky — a former KGB officer who will give the inside story on that very connection. His presentation — scheduled for the National Press Club in Washington — will be part of an all-day conference of America's Survival, Inc.

At previous ASI sessions, we learned of serious discussions amongst otherwise seemingly rational people — including some with PHDs — as to how it will be necessary — come the revolution — to exterminate millions of unreconstructed American patriots at "re-education" camps.

[Emphasis mine. —SteveB]

Occupy Wall Street

Last year, we reported in this space that the Occupy Wall Street (OWS) movement had all the appearances of a budding violent revolution. The individual believed most responsible for launching OWS is one Kalle Lasn, a self-described "student of revolution," whose hatred of America is reflected in his view that American capitalism has spawned "disastrous consumerism" (as he sees it) and that the United States is "ripe for [mass] rage."

Speaking of rage

As an example of the kind of rage Lasn has in mind, the OWS-style violent protesters this year went on a May Day rampage in Seattle, smashed store windows and inflicted vandalism on banks. Even bystanders just sitting in their cars were not safe from assault.

Lasn's tactic is to lead up to the day of violence by using the "Trojan Horse tactic" — i.e., articulate a deceptively simple Trojan Horse demand so specific and so doable as to be impossible to ignore, according to Discover the Network.

That is right out of the play book of Saul Alinsky, the community organizer who was a model for Barack Obama. Alinsky's "how to" for revolutionaries taught that revolution is a slow, patient process of incremental, rather than sudden, transformation. As demands escalate and become less reasonable or doable, the revolution comes closer to the violent stage of push vs. shove.

Stephen Lerner, another activist of that stripe (and an OWS supporter) has advocated measures that could "literally cause a new financial crisis" and "bring down the stock market." These people are beyond off-the-charts. Does anyone imagine they honestly believe the non-"1 percent" of the elderly whose retirement portfolios are in the market constitute "the rich?" Beyond that, we will need to brace ourselves for their violent rampages if Obama loses in November.

Muslim Brotherhood

Terrorism expert Ken Timmerman, Republican candidate for Congress (Md.-8) recently noted that **top Obama administration officials "have held secret meetings with the Muslim Brotherhood since the president assumed office.** As Timmerman notes, **"It's time we learned whose side this administration really is on: the side of freedom or the side of Islamist tyranny."**

Make no mistake: The Muslim Brotherhood, founded in 1928 — just a few years after the fall of the Ottoman Empire in World War 1 — has laid out its designs on the West. The United States ultimately is to become the Islamist States of America (or some similar designation); all "infidels" who refuse to bow to Islam are to be killed; women have no rights; honor killings and beheadings are permissible; the West must incorporate "Shariah Law" in lieu of our Constitution and the Bill of rights; and the Muslim Brotherhood has said right out in public that it seeks takeover of the West by the use of deceit and serial lying.

No better example of that self-proclaimed dishonesty was exhibited than when Hosni Mubarak — an ally of the West — was ousted as head of state in Egypt. The Muslim Brotherhood broke its promises not to participate in the Egyptian elections and not to attempt to control Parliament.

Now, it would be highly interesting to know what Obama and the Brotherhood discussed in these "secret meetings" he held with this worldwide organization whose aim is to destroy our civilization. The so-called "Arab Spring" that brought the Brotherhood to power in Egypt had the solid backing of Mr. Obama.

Brotherhood bares its fangs

So the Brotherhood — having won Egypt's presidential election by a thread, and having huddled with the alleged "leader of the free world" — now apparently feels less pressure to avoid "sticking it" to the U.S.

In Cairo, Egypt's President-elect Mohamed Morsi took a huge victory lap in proclaiming his victory. To hundreds of thousands of supporters in Tahir Square, he proclaimed that he will seek the release of Sheik Abdel-Rahman, who masterminded the first attack on the World Trade Center in 1993.

The "Blind Sheik" is serving time in a North Carolina prison for the bombing that killed 6, and also for unsuccessfully plotting to blow up other landmarks.

Chairman Peter King (R-N.Y.) of the House Homeland Security committee was outraged, saying it is "disgusting" that the president-elect would "declare that goal in an inaugural speech."

"The fact that he said this in his first speech," according to the Long Island congressman, "says to me that this is from the heart, and the Muslim Brotherhood has been trying to convince us that they have changed."

Of course, Obama would not be so politically stupid as to entertain that repulsive idea, at least not before the U.S. election.

That Morsi now feels free to reveal his true colors gives added weight to congressional candidate Ken Timmerman's question as to whose side our own president is on.

Yet another news item fails to offer reassurance on that score: The Obama administration not only excluded Israel from a counterterrorism conference in Spain, the president did not even mention Israel in his announcement of the event. How can you hold an international counterterrorism conference in the 21st century and not include the one

ally that has had the most experience at it — unless the president wishes deliberately to send a signal as to "whose side" his administration really is on — or will be after the election?

Not the end

There is more...much more. And we will explore it in our next installment. Meanwhile, we can ponder this warning from respected historian Arthur Herman, who says we appear to be heading for another civil war — this one between "the makers and the Takers."

The former are those who created the wealth, and "the source of productivity, innovation, creativity and growth," and we would add those who work hard and just want to raise their families and live the American Dream. The latter are those guiding or influenced by leftist foundations, media, academia, public employee unions, and those who have prospered through government which in turn leads them into "cash cow" status for liberal politics.

Makers vs. takers? Perhaps there are those who believe makers vs. fakers would be just as appropriate.

Many Americans resent being forced by law into government dependency — as they pour gobs of money into government programs while alternative proposals offering more choice to the consumer (and a better return on the payment of his hard-earned tax dollars) have been rejected by politicians whose motive is pure power, as government piles on one nonsense regulation atop another.

It is not a pretty picture, but with neither side willing to buckle, it just may take a second civil war to settle the issue of what kind of America we really want.

More next time.

"2012: America's Last Free Election?" (Part 2) by Wes Vernon, RenewAmerica

July 19, 2012, (<http://www.renewamerica.com/columns/vernon/120719>)

Tons of cash are behind the giant and hostile metaphorical mowing machine that seeks to take down the United States. Big money. In our last column, we discussed the threats coming at us from all directions: militarily, diplomatically, culturally, economically, by way of intimidation, and subversion/infiltration of our major institutions.

People who hate this country mean business. They will not be satisfied until we are under their heel. They have their own ideas as to how the world should work, be it the communist who wants a Stalinist-like world order, or an Islamist who wants a worldwide Caliphate. Both want a "world order" (read world dictatorship).

As we have noted in this space, credible analyses have suggested we could be heading toward a second civil war: "the makers vs. the takers" as Arthur Herman puts it; or "the ruling class vs. country class," as outlined by Angelo Codevilla in his thin but intellectually solid book *The Ruling Class*.

But where do these destructive forces get their money? Obviously not from the proverbial thin air.

Here's your answer (not old stuff)

Regular readers of this column know a huge part of the answer to that question: George Soros, the multi-billionaire who has bestowed his money and attempted influence into almost every corner of American life. That's old stuff? Here's what's new:

Today, at about the time this column is posted, a gathering at the National Press Club was to present a study whose findings verify that the fundamental transformation of the United States is financed by offshore and secret money. That offshore finance is in fact generously provided by George Soros. As we are reminded by Cliff Kincaid

(President of America's Survival Inc., the conference sponsor), Soros is a "moneybags for Barack Obama, the Democratic Party, and various Marxist groups."

ASI says Soros operates an offshore hedge fund, Quantum Funds, which makes the source of the funds "practically impossible to determine" (let your imagination run wild with that one).

If you see some irony here, given that agents for Mr. Soros's White House puppet make much of alleged (real or imagined) offshore accounts by the puppet's adversary in the presidential campaign, mark that down as (gasp!) another case of liberal hypocrisy. **Presumably one need not scratch his head to determine which is more suspicious: starting up Staples or funding a conspiracy to destroy this nation?**

The study released at the ASI conference exposes Soros "using his billions [including offshore] to wipe out American capitalism and the American way of life."

For example

George Soros, Angela Davis, and Critical Resistance by Tina Trent (Ph.D.) finds, for example, that Soros is bankrolling (just for starters) 1 — the work of the notorious Angela Davis, longtime communist, recipient of the Lenin Peace Prize from the old Soviet Union, still active in pushing for a Soviet-style America; and 2 — the Marxist Center for Constitutional Rights, now defending the criminal Wiki Leaks founder Julian Assange.

Army soldier Bradley Manning is on trial for passing classified information to Assange. Curiously (or perhaps not, depending on "whose side" the president is on), the Obama Justice Department has prohibited imposition of the death penalty in this case.

Interestingly (again, maybe not, if you look at the big picture), Wiki Leaks has posted an article defending the late Frank Marshall Davis, the Communist Party mentor of Barack Obama (and believed to be Obama's "real father"), and who has admitted sexual relations with children.

Open the prisons

The "Soros-Communist connection," as outlined by Dr. Trent's study, is also exemplified in the multibillionaire's funding of a Communist "prisoner's rights group" actually founded by "a former top official of the Moscow-financed Communist Party USA" (again Angela Davis).

1 — Several "prisoners' strikes" around the country have been supported by Critical Resistance, the Davis-guided and Soros-backed "criminals lobby."

2 — A lawsuit was filed by the Center for Constitutional Rights (another Soros-funded group) arguing that "solitary confinement" amounts to torture and "cruel and unusual" punishment. (Forget the rights of crime victims; they don't count here.)

3 — President Obama's Equal Employment Opportunity Commission is moving toward banning criminal background checks on the grounds that they're "discriminatory."

Soros money is bankrolling the "criminals lobby" movement that hopes to make "prisoners' rights" a cause of the liberal left. The next step, as Kincaid points out, is "to empty the prisons themselves."

One can see this as laying the groundwork that could conceivably amount to a pivotal part of the chaos that will reign (coordinated with simultaneous or near-simultaneous attacks from other sources) during the bringing down of America.

Critical Resistance has championed the cause of fugitive Marilyn Buck, onetime member of the terrorist Weather Underground, who was serving time behind bars for a long list of crimes. That is, she was until she was freed from prison. Her release (as ASI exposed) was carried out by officials of the Obama/Holder Justice Department who falsely claimed that she had "repented her terrorist ways."

Old cause, new money

"Prison reform" has long been championed by the Communist Party and the National Lawyers Guild (a communist front, so designated as long ago as September 1950 by the House Committee on Un-American Activities).

In the 21st century, the cause has been revived by the money showered upon it by George Soros and his satellites.

Dr. Tina Trent, in her report released Thursday of this week, cites thousands of dollars Soros's Open Society Institute gave to support a book written by Wilbert Rideau, one of the most cold-blooded, merciless murderers ever to walk the planet, who evaded execution and was released from prison in 2005 for his 1961 crime, thanks to the efforts of Johnny Cochran (of O.J. Simpson trial fame). In a video, Rideau acknowledged he should have been executed for his crime. His lawyers had "gamed" the appeals system (possible model for "prison reform"?)

The Communist/Islamist nexus & Soros largesse

Frank Gaffney, President of the Center for Security Policy, is one of America's most astute analysts of the threats to America. An insightful quote attributed to him is that Sharia, or Islamic Law is "Communism with a God."

As Kincaid notes at the ASI conference, radical Muslims are working with communists for the abolition of capitalism and the American way of life. Eventually these two ideologies might come of blows, but in the meantime, they constitute "an unholy alliance against America" (an alliance, we might add, that has the cooperation of the Soros interests).

(Repeated disclaimer — again: We're not talking about your Islamic neighbor or the nice lady in a burka who rings up a cash register at the supermarket. It is said that Islamic terrorists make up only 1 percent of the world's Islamic population. The worldwide Islamic population is at 1.62 billion. Meaning: 16 million violent radicals aiming to kill "infidels" — i.e., the rest of us...P.S. — There have been numerous reports of "Death to America" rhetoric preached within Mosques across America).

This column intends to return in the future to the ASI Conference. There are some excellent speakers lined up, and we need to talk about primary points that are made there.

The ubiquitous George Soros

One of the early efforts to expose the anti-American Soros empire was *The Shadow Party* by David Horowitz and Richard Poe.

The "Shadow Party," of course, is the Soros network. (And by the way, Soros's people have warned their critics, in effect, there's no point in trying to stop them because "that ship has sailed," as they privately warned Fox News amidst their (ultimately successful) effort to get Glenn Beck off cable TV. (Beck now does quite well on a nightly internet show).

Americans — Horowitz and Poe warn — should know that Soros and Co. have a plan to rewrite the U.S. Constitution. Obama has noted "flaws" in that same document (cherished to most of us) in that it bars him for doing the things he wants to do unilaterally (but which he does anyway, and we'll deal with that issue in the near future, as well).

It has been shown that the Soros machine 1 — has overthrown foreign governments, and might succeed doing the same thing here; 2 — has blanketed America through a vast network of private think tanks, foundations, unions, stealth PACs, and other front groups; 3 — has exchanged favors on both sides of the aisle; 4 — has taken effective control of the Democrat Party; and 5 — has sent its "radical infiltrators" to go about the business of quietly transforming America's societal, cultural, and political institutions "for more than a generation."

Beyond that...

The Soros machine has spent millions building or buying or inserting influence into 180 media outlets and front groups. Researching the extent of the far-flung, octopus-like Soros network is guaranteed to make your head swim. 180 media outlets. Does anyone wonder why no one on ABC, CBS, CNN, The New York Times, or The Washington Post has never — ever — done an investigative report on this individual so phenomenally powerful and influential in our society? Their silence is deafening.

Not only the journalist outlets themselves are tainted, but their "J schools" and supporting professional groups and newspaper "ombudsmen" — i.e., Pro-Publica's Journalism Advisory Board, the Center for Public Integrity, even the Columbia School of Journalism (long viewed as journalism's "crown jewel"!)). Whatever happened to avoidance of "the appearance of conflict of interest?"

One source of information on Soros is Brent Bozell's Media Research Center, which has identified people whose names or works you would know. They would include David Gergen (CNN) , Christine Amanpour (ABC), Jill Abramson (Executive Editor — *New York Times*), Leonard Downie (former editor, now VP-Washington Post Co.).

You see, that's why Soros is not satisfied merely with Beck's removal. He wants to shut down all of Fox News and conservative talk radio. He's not satisfied with a measly 180 media outlets. He wants the entire media to be Obama's de facto propaganda ministry.

The anti-Fox campaign includes boycotting advertisers; false charges of racism; blaming conservative hosts for inciting violence (never mind many of Soros's favored allies and causes have preached and practiced violence); and forcing small businesses not to allow Fox in their shops or workplaces.

The Soros long-term goals include destroying the Tea Party (of course); neutralizing the conservative movement; putting the boot to market capitalism (through overbearing, unnecessary regulations and taxes); creating a government-controlled-and-funded national "news" organization; and eliminating Judeo-Christian values from our culture.

Again, there is more to come. Meanwhile, once again, the question: Will we be destroyed culturally from within?; by terrorism within?; by military attack?; by a second civil war?; by a one-man power trip? Or a combination of the above? Daunting "choices."

"2012: America's Last Free Election?" (Part 3) by Wes Vernon, RenewAmerica

Aug. 6, 2012, (<http://www.renewamerica.com/columns/vernon/120806>)

Months before Barack Obama assumed the presidency, many Americans seeking substance in lieu of "change" sloganeering had an uneasy feeling about the man. There were just enough unsettling reports on parts of his background to raise concerns. But at that time, those questions elicited few answers. That is because Mr. Obama had spent millions to hide his background.

Four years later in July of 2012, as President Obama was gearing up for his re-election bid, it was left to the outspoken John Sununu — former governor of New Hampshire — to encapsulate the widespread unease about the man voters sent to the White House in 2008. He should "learn to be an American," advised the not always diplomatic New Englander.

Granted, Sununu made the remark as he campaigned for the president's opponent Mitt Romney. Politically motivated or not, one will search in vain for a more succinct analysis of what there is about Barack Obama that causes so much doubt in the minds of a significant slice of the U.S. electorate.

But in the final analysis, is that mere superficiality? A conference here in Washington late last month connected the dots of information that have emerged during Mr. Obama's first (hopefully last) term. "Learn to be an American?" The information imparted at the one-day gathering of America's Survival, Inc., clearly shows that Mr. Sununu's phrase transcends mere "gut instinct." The conference, held at the National Press Club, was titled "Vetting Obama,"

the clear inference being that the president had escaped the normal "vetting" process when running for the highest office in the land.

Obama's mentor

Among the speakers was Paul Kengor, author of *The Communist — Frank Marshall Davis: The Untold Story of Barack Obama's Mentor*.

Frank Marshall Davis was a card-carrying member of the Communist Party USA. No, he was not merely an innocent misled "dupe." This man was hard core. A clue to his devotion to Moscow (and Joseph Stalin's slaughter of millions in Soviet gulags and across Eastern Europe) came in Davis's declaration, "I admire Russia for wiping out an economic system which permitted a handful of rich to exploit and beat gold from the millions of plain people....I honor the Red Nation."

Frank Marshall Davis's writings for communist-controlled newspapers in Chicago and Honolulu followed a rigid pro-Soviet line including 1 — referring to the good people resisting Soviet takeovers in Eastern Europe as "fascists"; 2 — accusing Democrat President Harry Truman of picking up on the conquest of Europe where Adolph Hitler left off; and 3 — blasting the Republican 80th Congress for enacting supposedly "phony tax cuts" that hurt the poor and padded the pockets of millionaires. The "rich" and "corporations," Davis wrote, should pay their "fair share." (Sound familiar in 2012?) That "phony" tax cut, by the way, was a prime factor in America's post-war prosperity.

Lineage from mid-20th to early 21st century

There are several interesting and relevant strands that went into the mindset of the man now in the White House.

A — David Canter, "nurtured in the USSR under Stalin's collectivization," pleaded the Fifth Amendment when questioned by a congressional committee as to his Communist Party membership. This same David Canter would later mentor young journalist David Axelrod, who in 2008 would help get Barack Obama elected president.

B — An interesting timeline traces the rise of Valerie Jarrett — one of the most influential advisors to President Obama: Her father-in-law Vernon Jarrett and her maternal grandfather Robert R. Taylor both worked with Frank Marshall Davis as "joint members of communist fronts or in suspected front activities," writes Kengor.

C — David Axelrod and Valerie Jarrett became President Obama's top advisors. Jarrett reportedly took the lead in forging the anti-First Amendment policy forcing religious-based institutions to provide insurance that goes against their fundamental beliefs. Axelrod is the de facto mastermind of the Obama 2012 re-election effort. His formula — in the current and past Obama campaigns — is to slime every person or entity that gets in Obama's way.

Sources

Paul Kengor's book is a must-read for anyone with a mind open enough to want to discover what makes our 44th president tick. The Communist reads like a study of a long-neglected narrative about a conspiracy that has sought to bring down this republic since shortly after the 1917 Russian revolution, throughout the Cold War, and thereafter and right on up to the present day. It is an informative read for that broader perspective as much as it is an outline of what led to Mr. Obama's world outlook. (Note: Davis's influence on Obama was thorough, from when the future president was a young boy and well into his teens).

The above is a mere sampling. The record shows Barack Obama — through much of his life and career — has been so thoroughly immersed in influences totally hostile to the United States that "learning to be an American" is naturally hard for him. He can't help it.

Paul Kengor, in researching for his book, consulted many credible sources, including, for example, Herbert Romerstein — arguably the world's greatest authority on communism and intelligence operations in general. As for how it was discovered that Frank Marshall Davis was in fact a very key influence in Obama's life, the best reference would be "Obama's Communist Mentor," Accuracy in Media, Feb. 18, 2008. That report was authored by Cliff Kincaid (now AIM's chief investigator, as well as President of July 19 conference sponsor, America's Survival, Inc.)

Obama & pro-Soviet "agent of Influence"

Barack Obama's lifelong support from dedicated hard-core communists (with both a large and small "c") did not end with Frank Marshall Davis. The woman who was instrumental to the future president's first job in politics was the subject of a talk at the recent conference. The speaker was Trevor Loudon, a New Zealand blogger and author of the 629-page encyclopedic *Barack Obama and the Enemies Within*.

(Note — The fact that a New Zealander feels compelled to issue the warning as to what is happening to America at this perilous time in its history speaks volumes as to the failure/refusal of America's mainstream media to inform us of the sheer volume of threats to our security. Loudon, a friend of this column, is concerned, looking from beyond our borders, that once the United States goes down, then so too does Western Civilization. The U.S. is the last bastion, Trevor believes. Once it is overtaken by its "enemies within," then what refuge is left?)

Alice Palmer

In his written research prepared for the conference (that goes into more detail than time for his actual July 19 speech would allow) Loudon briefly reviews such influences as Davis and Weather Undergrounders Bill Ayers and Bernadine Dorn, et al, but adds "the individual in Obama's life most closely tied to the Soviet Russian component of international communism was undoubtedly former Illinois State Senator Alice Palmer."

Indeed, though the relationship eventually went sour (for reasons having nothing to do with her communist affiliations), Alice Palmer "provided the first rung up the ladder to Obama's rise to the Oval Office."

Obama and Palmer were attracted to the Chicago affiliate of the New Party formed by such collaborators as "the Soviet and Cuban-affiliated Institute for Policy Studies" (a far, far left Washington think tank) and subject of past installments of this column.

Obama was Palmer's chief of staff as she prepared for her own (doomed) congressional race.

"Friends of Alice Palmer" included Barack Obama, along with future Democratic Socialists of America members Timuel Black and future congressman Danny Davis, both of whom remain good friends with Obama to this day. Rep. Danny Davis, as recently noted in this column, accepted an award from the Communist Party in Chicago.

Alice Palmer introduced Obama to the local political community at a 1995 gathering in the Chicago home of Weather Underground terrorists William Ayers and Bernadine Dorn.

So who exactly is this person?

Alice Palmer's propensity for far-left causes dates back to her high school days and early on in her career as an influential photo journalist.

Alice Palmer and her husband were invited by Grenada's government of Maurice Bishop to attend that country's first anniversary celebration of its Marxist Leninist "revolution."

The invite almost certainly was arranged by Don Rojas, a key player in the Bishop government who today is active in the U.S. via the Independent Progressive Politics network which includes several Marxist groups such as the Democratic Socialists of America and the Communist Party spinoff Committees of Correspondence.

In the 1980s, Alice Palmer was involved in Soviet-coordinated "peace" networks, including the (still existing) World Peace Council. The WPC directed most of its propaganda against Western military alliances, armaments, and the like. It was "the major Soviet-controlled Communist organization," under the tight grip of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and the KGB.

Trevor Loudon notes that Alice Palmer was "an Executive Board member of the Communist Party USA-dominated U.S. Peace Council," the American affiliate of the World Peace council from 1983-1985.

Further

The prodigious New Zealand researcher cites a slew of Communists and their backers who in one way or the other have supported Barack Obama on his way to the White House, many of them in Alice Palmer's orbit.

The files seemingly are endless, both on Alice Palmer and other groups or individuals with whom Barack Obama has collaborated or who have helped in his quest for the nation's highest office. There is more. Much more. Until we prepare to move on to future installments of this series, we would leave with this thought.

Why?

Why on earth would the man who became America's first black president (in itself a reflection of the American dream) want to take over the world's best (but imperfect) health care system in favor of what is likely to end up as (at best impersonal) assembly-line medicine? Why would he presume the right to ignore the laws he doesn't like, and violate the Constitution (thereby violating his oath of office)? His constant overreach for power raises a legitimate question as to whether a second term will leave us with a 2016 election any more credible than those in Iran or Venezuela.

Why would he contemplate (as reportedly "in the wings") the roll-out in his second term of a "domestic" army supposedly to fight for the "global warming" hoax, but (even more frightening) bears the organizational potential for a federal police force?

Or why would he consider (as he reportedly is planning) a second-term assault on Americans' right to live in suburbia? Isn't this the United States of America, where people can choose to live where they want to live without Big Brother infringing on their precious freedoms by telling them via government fiat how they shall live? (BTW, I'm not necessarily a huge fan of suburbs, though I've lived in them most of my adult life after growing up in a city. But I do believe there are some things that come under the heading of "Live and let live." This man views that as a totally foreign concept — beyond his intellectual DNA.

Why the contempt of private sector (mostly small) business — the backbone of America's economy — with "You didn't build that"?

Time for "change"

Barack Obama sincerely believes in what he is doing. And that's the problem. It reflects everything he was taught starting at a tender age. Everything of any substance that he wishes for this country is wrong — totally incompatible with American values. Again, he can't help himself. That is who he is.

"Learn to be an American?" Good luck with the "learning" experience, Mr. President. Just not as on-the-job training at 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue. No way.

© Wes Vernon

20120807-04	12:41	SteveB	Re: "2012: America's Last Free Election?" (reply to SteveM, above) & "The Grand Old Party's Breaking Up"
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Communists coming out of the woodwork, huh? Very bizarre, don't you think?

Here, you attempt to assassinate the characters of two good men. It won't work.

(Frank Marshall Davis in Hawaii, from Wikipedia): "He worked quietly, he wrote even when he no longer published his writings, and he talked with those who came to visit him--always seeking to present the truth of his vision, confident that social justice and human dignity would finally prevail. Indeed, despite his radical

rhetoric, Davis was optimistic that good relations between ethnic groups could and would lead to a better world.

"It can be argued that Davis escaped defeat like a trickster, playing dead only to arise later and win the race, although the politics of defeat were all around him. If society seemed to defeat him by denying him financial rewards, publication, and status, he continued to write prolifically. He stood by his principle that the only way to achieve social equality was to acknowledge and discuss publicly the racial and ethnic dynamics in all their complexity situated in an unjust society. He provided a bold, defiant model for writers to hold onto their convictions and articulate them."

Here's something a little closer to the truth:

"The Grand Old Party's Breaking Up" by Froma Harrop, NationofChange

Aug. 7, 2012, (<http://www.nationofchange.org/grand-old-party-s-breaking-1344352652>)

When traditional Republicans tell their tea party wing that they have to negotiate with Democrats, the radicals' frequent response is: No, they don't. One side has to win. But before that fistfight at the edge of the falls can take place, one side has to win within the Republican Party. Civil wars are not pretty.

The tea party movement has become the dead bad-luck bird hanging around the GOP establishment's neck. Its anger-fueled energy has forced moderate Republicans off ballots in places where moderates tend to win. It has burdened otherwise centrist Republicans with radical positions that don't go well with a general electorate. **The Grand Old Party is being taken over by an ideological fringe with unclear motives, a loose grasp on reality and little interest in actually governing.**

The most recent victim is Ohio Republican Steven LaTourette, who says that he's had it after 18 years in the House. The uncompromising partisanship drove him out. "Anybody that doesn't understand that in a split government, you've got to find a common-ground way out of it, it's not going to be your way or the highway, is nuts," he said.

But suppose the right wing is nuts. Or suppose it isn't nuts but doesn't quite understand that pushing the United States to the brink of default, as it did last summer, is bad for the world, the United States and even itself. Or perhaps the radicals think that grown-ups somewhere will attend to the details while they play.

The right wing so badgered Maine Sen. Olympia Snowe that the Republican moderate — and shoo-in for re-election — has decided to leave the Senate. Now the party may lose her Senate seat to a Democrat. In Indiana, longtime Republican statesman Sen. Richard Lugar lost the primary to Richard Mourdock, a tea party favorite. That seat is now up in the air as Mourdock and Democratic Rep. Joe Donnelly battle it out. Donnelly has turned his opponent's tea party ties into a campaign issue.

Poor Mitt Romney is unable to pick sides — among fellow Republicans, that is. He says one thing in swing state Colorado, another in usually Republican Indiana. His socially moderate record as governor of Massachusetts would play well with most independents, who will ultimately decide the election. But he can't go there for fear of losing a right wing that does not like him.

Speaking of Massachusetts, Republican Sen. Scott Brown is now running neck and neck with Democrat Elizabeth Warren. He's done this in a generally liberal state by talking up his independent stands and how he wants to work with Democrats. But suppose he's re-elected and his fellow Republicans won't work with him, a likelihood, given the increasing demonization of moderates within the party.

And suppose — a real consideration for Massachusetts voters — Brown becomes a neutered outcast, while his re-election sends control of the closely divided Senate to the right-wingers. Do centrists in Massachusetts or anywhere else want tea party activist Jim DeMint, of South Carolina, controlling the powerful Senate Commerce, Science and Transportation Committee?

And with the pragmatic Republican establishment under ideological attack, its moderates may no longer feel free to be themselves. Snowe voted to create the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, which the right opposed. But with the Maine tea party later breathing down her neck, she only voted "present" during a filibuster of the appointee to run the bureau, the unobjectionable Richard Cordray, former attorney general of Ohio.

One's rooting for traditional Republicans to retake control of the asylum and restore a normal brand of politics. That would be very good for the country, a not-small consideration. The only side winning so far is the Democrats'.

20120807-05 12:43 Tom Fw: "Service"

We are getting "Serviced" from our government, & I don't appreciate it. The email below is from one of my Canadian friends.

[Source of original email unknown. -SteveB]

"Service"

I become confused when I hear the word "Service" used with these agencies:

Canada Revenue 'Service'
Canada Post 'Service'
Telephone 'Service'
Cable TV 'Service'
Civil 'Service'
Federal, province, city, & public 'Service'
Customer 'Service'

This is NOT what I thought 'Service' meant.

But today, I overheard two farmers talking, and one of them said he had hired a bull to 'Service' a few cows.

BAM!! It all came into focus. Now I understand what all those agencies are doing to us.

You are now as enlightened as I am.

;-(. . . I.R.S. for U.S.

20120807-06 14:30 SteveM Fw: Lying Socialist Thieves

The internal government emails contradict sworn testimony, in federal court and before Congress, given by several Obama administration figures. They also indicate that the administration misled lawmakers and the courts about the sequence of events surrounding the termination of those non-union pensions, and that administration figures violated federal law.

Rep. Turner blames Geithner for Delphi pensions decision, calls for pension...:

<http://dailycaller.com/2012/08/07/rep-turner-blames-geithner-for-delphi-pensions-decision-calls-for-pension-restoration/>.

Emails: Geithner, Treasury drove cutoff of non-union Delphi workers' pensions:

<http://dailycaller.com/2012/08/07/emails-geithner-treasury-drove-cutoff-of-non-union-delphi-workers-pensions/>.

Obama administration footprints all over denial of pension benefits to non-union...:

<http://www.powerlineblog.com/archives/2012/08/obama-administration-footprints-all-over-denial-of-pension-benefits-to-non-union-delphi-employees.php>.

Leaked Emails Put Tim Geithner Behind Delphi Non-Union Pension Elimination:

<http://www.inquisitr.com/294984/leaked-emails-put-tim-geithner-behind-delphi-non-union-pension-elimination/>.

Find Reviews by Make: <http://www.thetruthaboutcars.com/2012/08/455806/>.

Tim Geithner Pressures Delphi to Cut 20K Worker Pensions Shows Obama is In...:

<http://www.policymic.com/articles/12395/tim-geithner-pressures-delphi-to-cut-20k-worker-pensions-shows-obama-is-in-bed-with-unions>.

Emails show Obama administration involvement in killing non-union auto pensions:

<http://www.humanevents.com/2012/08/07/emails-show-obama-administration-involvement-in-killing-non-union-auto-pensions/>.

FLASHBACK: Obama in 2008: Failure to protect pensions 'not the America I...:

<http://dailycaller.com/2012/08/07/flashback-obama-in-2008-failure-to-protect-pensions-not-the-america-i-believe-in/>.

Auto-Bailout Casualties: <http://www.nationalreview.com/articles/313125/auto-bailout-casualties-john-berlau>.

20120807-07	15:34	SteveB	Re: Lying Socialist Thieves (reply to SteveM, above)
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Ya, one of Bush's guys. I thought O should have gotten rid of all of them from the beginning.

You see, O isn't nearly radical enough!

P.S. If, in all this time, the courts have done nothing, it doesn't seem like there's much of a case here...

20120807-09	16:18	SteveM	Re: Lying Socialist Thieves (reply to SteveB, above)
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Why Obama is a Marxist: **Being jealous of the rich and stealing their money. (The 20,000 non union retirees are in court now.)**

To understand why Barack Obama is a Marxist all that is required is to understand his position on the Bush Tax Cuts.. I will be voting for Mitt. I think he's a clean-cut guy who will do the right things for the most part. But he's also rich, and because of that, he knows how to make money. So news flash for those who are struggling to find a job, or want a crack at the American dream—you want people who understand wealth creation to hold political offices. You certainly don't want confused ex-college professors who spent too much time reading Karl Marx in college while smoking large quantities of dope with other Marxist teachers at the University of Chicago.

The Marxist believes that economic production such as land, raw materials, factories, tools, and people should become common property, so that every member of society could work according to their capacities and consume according to their needs. To the Marxist this is the only way to prevent the rich from living at the expense of the poor. And that statement defines the Presidency of Barack Obama. It is his belief in this Marxist idea that makes him consider that he has a right to raise taxes on the rich, while supplementing the poor, and maintaining the middle-class because the goal is complete destruction of the rich to expand the middle-class. It is for these reasons, and this specific definition when matched to the behavior of Barack Obama that indicates without any question that Obama is the first open Marxist to ever sit in The White House.

"Political correctness is a doctrine, fostered by a delusional, illogical minority, and rabidly promoted by an unscrupulous mainstream media, which holds forth the proposition that it is entirely possible to pick up a turd by the clean end." —unknown

20120807-11 17:50 SteveB Re: Lying Socialist Thieves (reply to SteveM, above)

I appreciate your more thoughtful response.

You raise three points:

1. President Obama is a "communist". Whatever that is... Are the Chinese still communists? The Russians? Even the North Vietnamese or Cubans? Not except by some weird definition. But perhaps you are one of those who would define the Europeans and Israelis as "communists"... maybe because they have decent government-involved health-care systems that, even R0mney admits, work much better than ours. Do you think Europeans don't have free enterprise or do you seriously doubt the President's commitment to free enterprise? Funny, to me, the first thing a "communist" would do is what our local Bolivian "communist", Evo Morales, did when he took power: write a new constitution, then take-over or control the big banks and big energy companies. The rest takes care of itself and is peanuts compared to the worlds of finance and energy. President Obama, even though he had an incredible opportunity to do much the same thing after Bush ran us off the cliff, instead chose to leave finance and energy in the hands of the crooks and fools who helped create the problems in the first place. He kowtows to the big money almost as badly as the Republicans, What a strange "communist"!

By the way...I don't know how to break this to you...the Bush tax cuts, for or against, have nothing to do with communism, only the fair distribution of taxation.

No one wants to pay taxes. They just, normally, recognize that they need certain services that, traditionally, only a government can provide. For years, they tried carrying guns, having guns in their homes, guns everywhere, because government was weak or non-existent. These people rejected this as a way of life and chose government instead, because that was the only way they could be safe. That's what history taught us and we have forgotten.

But government must be paid for, so taxes must be collected. Though they should, people don't want to pay taxes, in general. Maybe the tit-for-tat is too nebulous. A Republican is comfortable paying money directly to an expensive private school for his children, but doesn't feel he should have to pay property or income taxes to pay for the same thing as part of the traditional system of education that helped create a great country. Human nature, I guess.

To me, the only fair way to collect taxes is to devise a system whereby each taxpayer feels equal pain when they pay. Let's assume we tax only people who can afford to pay (they work and don't live in poverty, perhaps). And let's assume we have citizens who would feel a lot of pain if they had to pay \$1000 in taxes. How much would R0mney have to pay to feel the same pain? A lot more than what he actually pays, and he wants to pay even less! I don't think that's fair. R0mney's ideal is a flat tax. Haha. Equal pain is what progressive taxation is all about and it has been one of America's core principles for a long, long time. The Bush tax cuts go against this principle. To want them gone and the rich taxed more, as they used to be during America's more prosperous days, is certainly not "communist" unless you simply intend to call silly, meaningless names.

2. President Obama is a "confused ex-college professors who spent too much time reading Karl Marx in college while smoking large quantities of dope." Well, I just have to say that, even if all this is true, it sure doesn't seem to have affected the man in any negative way. This is really just more silly name-calling. You know something? For a long time now, many years, all the people I've met who never smoked marijuana have had important traits in common—they are invariably cowards, completely incapable of curiosity, or just plain stupid. None of these are good qualities in a President. The opposites of these qualities—courage, inquisitiveness and the willingness to study, and intelligence are good Presidential qualities and things I find in President Obama in abundance, even though I don't always agree with his actions.

3. R0mney would make a better President because of his business experience. This is really the heart of the matter, isn't it? And one to which I have no facile answer, yet I would like to explain my point of view on this

one, right or wrong. I'm sure you remember that I never could see how wrecking those planes and sitting in that Hanoi prison could possibly have prepared McCain for the heavy-duty executive position that was soon to become available at the White House. I just don't see the connection. Business school, maybe. The way LBJ got there, yes. Prison, no. And isn't it really the same story with Mittens having been a (please excuse me while I execute 100 bows) businessman? And Bain Capital was really a pretty small business (whenever it was that he worked there), as Donald Trump has pointed out. They leveraged everything. Running anything Mitt has ever run is nothing compared to running the Executive branch of government for four years. I won't even get into all the problematic issues at Bain, like the outsourcing and raping and pillaging and destruction of jobs in the name of outrageous profits. Don't believe me? Google why Mittens didn't go to Italy during his alleged "European" tour-de-oops.

On the other hand, running the Executive branch of government for four years and having pulled it off at least moderately successfully is probably pretty good experience for being President. I just don't see how the two can be compared. If your argument for Romney is experience, I simply find that argument lacking at this point in time. Bain Capital, Staples, the Olympics, even running a big Presidential campaign are all small fish compared to the whale of the POTUS job, the one that whitens the hair of all who hold the office.

I just don't see how experience can win this election for Mittens. He's gonna have to come up with some other reason to vote for him and his anti-middle class party. And the old Republican lies and scare tactics about the ALIEN, MUSLIM, COMMUNIST COMMUNITY ORGANIZER simply aren't going to cut it any better in this election than in the last. Just my humble opinion...

4. Oh, and political correctness is not a doctrine. :-)

I'm sure, just like President Obama in 2008, the largest thing Mittens has ever run in his life is this presidential campaign. For him, it's a \$1 billion business, at least.

But this time around, Mr. Obama has just a tad more experience under his belt than his opponent, don't you think?

20120807-19 21:51 Art Re: Lying Socialist Thieves (reply to all, above)

Has anyone else noticed the pattern here? I think it may be a childhood game where anything anyone says the other person tries to turn it around. I can't recall the name of the game.

Clearly some Republican strategist, if I can use the term that loosely, has made this a part of the campaign. Every time Romney's fingers are caught in the till, they try to turn it around. President Obama is the outsourcer in chief, the President ate dog, President Obama wants to deny people the opportunity to vote in Ohio, and on and on. It has happened on almost every issue so far. This "put up or shut up" is just the latest. As is so nicely presented below, the issue is Romney's taxes, not Reid's source. Note too, Reid has been very careful to say he has no idea how accurate this claim is. But as Reid says, Romney wouldn't qualify for any top position in the Federal Government today unless he agreed to release his back tax returns.

The Republicans obviously think the voting public is incredibly stupid and maybe they are right.

20120807-20 22:00 Tom Re: Lying Socialist Thieves (reply to Art, above)

Art, good points! I'll have Mittens Romney release more of his tax returns when President B. H. Obama releases his college transcripts, his passport records, and some of his "Law Review" opinion/papers!

20120807-08 15:58 SteveB 'Put up or shut up'??? GET SERIOUS!

From CNN (http://us.cnn.com/2012/08/07/politics/reid-romney-taxes/index.html?hpt=hp_t1):

Romney himself pushed back against Reid's accusations twice last week, insisting that he has paid a lot of money in taxes -- and telling the majority leader to either **"put up or shut up."**

Republicans are calling Reid a liar? Reid isn't running for President. R0mney is (maybe).

R0mney is telling Reid to "put up or shut up"???

That's exactly the point. That's what the world is saying to R0mney!

All the coward has to do is produce his taxes and prove Reid is lying. What a golden opportunity!

If he doesn't, he loses all credibility in talking about the economy. He's already proven he has no credibility when talking about Obama's birthplace, Bain, the auto bailout, or foreign affairs (LOL).

That doesn't leave much territory for R0mney. Maybe he could talk about Michael Vick and humane treatment of animals? Maybe he could talk about his multiple wives?

THIS ISSUE IS A VERY BIG DEAL, in my estimation. It is a complete roadblock for the GOP, unless they can make their candidate come clean.

They can call "liar" all they want. It's theirs to prove. No one else's.

T-R-A-N-S-P-A-R-E-N-C-Y!!!! The people demand it!

[20120807-10](#) 16:57 SteveM Re: 'Put up or shut up'???' GET SERIOUS! (reply to SteveB, above)

Reid used the well of the Senate where he could not be prosecuted for libel. Dummy Reid is the coward!

[20120807-13](#) 17:58 SteveB Re: 'Put up or shut up'???' GET SERIOUS! (reply to SteveM, above)

Sorry, no libel is possible. R0mney is a public figure. Anyone can say what they want. Otherwise, the President could have sued you all a long time ago.

Whomever you got your 'fact' from about the floor of the Senate, you now know that person is a liar. Is it Rush? Glenn the lunatic?

Reid told his story in the Senate for emphasis, and has repeated it since, in at least one other venue, just in case you want to sue him for libel (which, by the way, R0mney might not want to do even if he could, because he would be forced to produce those tax returns). Darn!

The ball is clearly in R0mney's court...but no one's home...oh, maybe he's in one of his other homes...maybe the one with all the cool, expensive car elevators!

[20120807-12](#) 17:50 Art Re: 'Put up or shut up'???' GET SERIOUS! (reply to SteveB, above)

WAIT A MINUTE. I NEVER SMOKED MARIJUANA. Drank though. Does that count?

[20120807-14](#) 18:24 SteveB Re: 'Put up or shut up'???' GET SERIOUS! (reply to Art, above)

I'm not sure I've ever actually met you, Art. A situation I hope to change next year during our USA tour!

I guess there are just some of you who slipped through the cracks. And you were a Republican, right? ;-)

Remember, all my friends are communists! LOL!

[20120807-15](#) 18:53 Ben Re: 'Put up or shut up'??? GET SERIOUS! (reply to SteveB, above)

If the Tour includes Austin, Tom would like to meet you.

Tom is very interesting. He's a huge, powerful guy, nearly crippled from spine and knee damage earned from many parachute drops under less than ideal conditions. Very bright; has an advanced degree in biology, and is an expert on some weird little salamander somewhere, or something like that; I believe he studied a species of monkey, too, in central America. He's been all over the world, and has eaten everything imaginable, and loves people.

He's been a real mentor to me and my fascination with sport shooting.

Show up with enough time on your hands, and I'll take you to the range!

[20120807-17](#) 21:15 SteveB Re: 'Put up or shut up'??? GET SERIOUS! (reply to Ben, above)

We're going around the whole outside of the continental US + Indiana. Up the East Coast from Florida to Maine, Niagara Falls, Michigan (beaver Island???), Chicago, Montana, Seattle, down the West Coast, then back across the southern US, returning to Florida. I plan on doing a book about the trip.

Definitely planning on stopping by Austin! Looking forward to good food, good music, and good companionship! Want to meet Tom, for sure! Maybe I'll even bring my own guns.

[20120807-16](#) 19:30 Art Re: 'Put up or shut up'??? GET SERIOUS! (reply to SteveB, above)

Remember, I'm a lot older than all you guys. I'm not even sure they had marijuana then. And yes, I was a Republican. On the other hand I've had a low tolerance for stupidity and selfishness. Hence the switch. Look forward to seeing you. Plenty of room but you have to like critters.

[20120807-18](#) 21:18 SteveB Re: 'Put up or shut up'??? GET SERIOUS! (reply to Art, above)

Appreciate the invite. Definitely looking forward to spending a little time with you.

I tell everyone we'll be staying at their house for two weeks just to freak them out, but we're really planning on motels and a day or so in each locale.

Can't wait to meet your "critters"!

David Axelrod, a senior adviser to President Barack Obama

"We passed without, frankly, the help of the Republican caucus, we passed **25 tax cuts last year**, mostly aimed at the middle class and small businesses."

~David Axelrod on Sunday, January 31st, 2010 in NBC's "Meet the Press"



PolitiFact.com

<http://www.realtyaustin.com/blog/austin-real-estate-statistics/>



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

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FRIENDS OF THE MIDDLE **NEWSLETTER #200 — AUG. 9, 2012**

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INDEX: Click here.

What Love Can Do

(posted by Steven W. Baker / SteveB, Aug. 9, 2012)

Sometimes it's difficult to remember the power of what the heart, the human spirit, can do when it embraces the meaning of life, which was there all along, perhaps unrecognized and undiscovered.

"Photographer Captures Tender Moment Between Man and His Sick Dog in Lake Superior" by Cavan Sieczkowski, Huffington Post

Aug. 8, 2012, (http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/08/08/man-dog-lake-superior-photo-n_1755609.html?utm_hp_ref=mostpopular)



They say a dog is a man's best friend, but to John Unger, a Wisconsin resident, his dog, Schoep, means everything.

Unger adopted Schoep, named after the famous Wisconsin ice cream, when he was just a puppy, and the two have been together ever since. Now, at 19 years old, Schoep has arthritis and has trouble sleeping, the Pioneer Press reports. Unger found that water is therapeutic for his pained buddy, so he takes Schoep into Lake Superior and lulls him to sleep.

Photographer Hannah Stonehouse Hudson, owner of Stonehouse Photography and a friend of Unger's, decided to capture the relationship between the man and his dog down by the water.

"This photo was from a last minute session," the Bayfield, Wis., photographer told The Huffington Post in an email. "We had been trying to get together for weeks, but it kept not happening because of my travel schedule for Stonehouse. We finally got together last Tuesday (the 31st). I had about 5 minutes to shoot and this is what I caught -- a man and his dog. John loving his Schoep, and Schoep trusting John so much he falls asleep in the buoyancy of the water. This is in no way posed - I hate posed photos - they never, ever capture the true essence of anything."

Stonehouse Hudson decided to post the photo to Facebook, where she described the pair's loving relationship.

"This 19 year old Shep being cradled in his father's arms last night in Lake Superior," she wrote in the Facebook post, which has received more than 207,000 likes and 116,000 shares as of Wednesday morning.

"Shep falls asleep every night when he is carried into the lake. The buoyancy of the water soothes his arthritic bones. Lake Superior is very warm right now, so the temp of the water is perfect. I was so happy I got to capture this moment for John. By the way, John rescued Shep as an 8 month old puppy, and he's been by his side through many adventures," she continued.

Stonehouse Hudson never imagined the tender moment she captured would eventually go viral and touch the hearts of hundreds of thousands.

"John lives for this dog, and for the dog's comfort," she told HuffPost. "My mother has a saying, 'Everything is for the comfort and convenience of the Dog.' John is a prime example of this."

Stonehouse Hudson regularly photographs dogs as part of her profession. She offers pet sessions and often takes pictures of dogs at weddings. To give back, she does free shoots of hard-to-place animals for local shelters.

She said the photograph of Unger and Schoep is more than just a moment frozen in time; it's an everlasting reminder.

"I want people to identify with this photo, and remember a time when they felt safe, loved, and cared for," Stonehouse Hudson said. "Then I want them to channel those feelings and pay it forward! There is way too much negativity in this world - maybe with this one photo we can start to change things just a tiny bit."

UPDATE: John Lundy of the *Duluth News Tribune* interviewed John Unger, who described how Schoep saved his life. After breaking up with his former fiancée, Unger had been having suicidal thoughts. "To be honest with you, I don't think I'd be here if I didn't have Schoep with me (that night)," Unger told Lundy. "He just snapped me out of it. I don't know how to explain it. He just snapped me out of it. ... I just want to do whatever I can for this dog because he basically saved my ass." Minnesota Public Radio reports that the popularity of the photo has spurred an outpouring of support in the form of donations to help pay for laser treatment for Schoep's arthritis.

Intrepid Integrity (for Dusty)

We laughingly gave the little golden ball of fur
A big name: Dustin Moondog Biter Baker
But we just called him Dusty, for short
He was the truest friend I ever had.

He grew up to rule the dog part of our town
For years, most of the puppies born were his
Half Golden Retriever and half whatever
Because we let him go where he wanted.

He took care of himself pretty well
Except when he killed the neighbor's duck
And once, after being gone unusually long,
We got a call that he'd been hit by a truck.

He'd bring back almost anything I could throw
Including rocks on frigid Lake Michigan's bottom
In tall grass he'd circle, looking back at me,
Thinking about the trajectory from where I stood.

I'm sure it was Dusty who invented the game
We used to play on the frozen lake by our house
I'd skate out to the middle, Dusty following, smiling
Then I'd throw a stick as far as I could.

I would skate and he would scramble
As fast as we could go, racing for that stick
If I got there first, then I won that round
And I'd throw the stick to race for it again.

But if he beat me and got the prize, round two began
To win, Dusty had to get the stick to shore
Before I could get close enough to leap and tackle him
So he'd run and I'd skate as if all depended on it.

He was big and fast and strong, but ice was my equalizer
If I skated my fastest and was lucky
I'd catch up, launch myself at him and bring him down
Both of us tumbling in a pile across the crust of snow.

He could be gentle, though, as well as boisterous
When my three-year-old daughter got her first skates
I held her mittened hand as we went onto the lake
Then I noticed that Dusty held her other in his mouth.

He was never jealous of the kids as they entered our lives
He never held a grudge if I had to punish him
He always loved us with all his mighty golden heart
He was a better friend than I have ever been able to be.

When, after years of loyalty, he lay dying at the vet's of cancer
I wasn't able to go see him to say a last goodbye
But it was like losing a son and I'm not sure I could have
Faced the hurt imploring loving look in his big brown eyes.

I don't believe dogs are much different than we humans
Only, in Dusty's case, he was more noble than most
He deserves as much as good people to be in Heaven
I just hope I'm good enough to see him there someday.

©1999,2012 Steven W. Baker

20120808-01	06:14	Tom	Video: Shooter Who Aided Officer Gives His Account of Peach House RV Park Incident
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Watch the interview of this hero. This is Texas greatness.

(<http://youtu.be/4g1n8cmwhIY>) Vic Stacy, the resident of Peach House RV Park who came to the aid of Early Police Sgt. Steven Means Sunday after two people were killed by Charles Ronald Conner, insists he's not a hero — he just did what had to be done. Stacy told the Brownwood Bulletin when he saw that the police officer couldn't get a good shot at the gunman, "I jumped in there, put that first shot in him, and knocked him down." Here are portions of the interview.

20120808-02	07:14	MarthaH	"School's Policy Requires Girls to Take Pregnancy Tests"
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"School's Policy Requires Girls to Take Pregnancy Tests" by Lisa Flam, NBC News/TODAY

Aug. 7, 2012, (http://today.msnbc.msn.com/id/48554183/ns/today-back_to_school/t/schools-policy-requires-girls-take-pregnancy-tests/#.UCOcX51ISEo)

Calling a charter school's policy on pregnant students illegal, Louisiana education officials will require the Delhi Charter School to drop its classroom ban on pregnant students and the ability to mandate pregnancy tests for students suspected of being pregnant.

The state-funded school in Delhi, La., says in its "Student Pregnancy Policy" that pregnant girls should leave school or study at home.

The American Civil Liberties Union of Louisiana brought attention to the policy on Monday, calling on the school to drop the rule or face legal action. By Tuesday evening, state officials agreed that the policy violated federal law. "We are requiring an immediate change to the policy," the Louisiana State Department of Education said in a statement Tuesday night.

A letter dated Monday from Michael Higgins, director of law and policy in the Louisiana office of school choice, to the school says it has until Aug. 16 to provide documentation showing a change in policy. In the letter, released to TODAY.com Tuesday evening, the state asks for a policy that "does not discriminate against pregnant students or students perceived to be pregnant" and says that "under no circumstances shall the school require any student to take a pregnancy test."

The school, which has approximately 700 students from kindergarten to 12th grade, said earlier in the day that although there have never been any complaints about the policy, it was under legal review "to ensure that necessary revisions are made so that our school is in full compliance with constitutional law."

The ACLU sent the school a letter on Monday, saying that the policy violates federal law and the U.S. Constitution, and threatening legal action if it is not revised immediately.

"The policy discriminates against female students not just for being pregnant but even for the possibility that they might be pregnant, and treats them as though pregnancy was some kind of contagious disease by telling them they can't stay in school," Marjorie Esman, executive director of the American Civil Liberties Union of Louisiana, told TODAY.com. "That is a gross violation of the law and their right to have an education."

The ACLU says the policy violates Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, the federal law that bans discrimination based on gender in educational programs, as well as the equal protection and due process clauses of the Constitution. The policy is discriminatory because it treats girls who are pregnant or suspected of being pregnant differently from all other students, the ACLU says.

"What a school should do is treat pregnancy as any other medical condition and allow the student to participate fully in anything that she's medically capable of participating in," Esman said, noting the policy doesn't say anything about male students who father children.

The Delhi school policy says that if a student is suspected of being pregnant, a parent conference will be held and the school will have the right to require female students to take pregnancy tests and refer those girls to a doctor of its choice.

Pregnant students can't attend classes on campus; they must study at home. Girls suspected of being pregnant who refuse to take the test will be forced to study at home or leave school.

In outlining its policy, the school mentions the high expectations it has for students and the school's high standards. "Delhi Charter School has established an environment whereby the conduct of its students must be in keeping with the school's goals and objectives relative to character development," the policy reads. "The Delhi Charter School curriculum will maintain an environment in which all students will learn and exhibit acceptable character traits that govern language, gestures, physical actions, and written words."

According to the ACLU, 70 percent of teen moms leave school, in part because of illegal discrimination.

20120808-03	07:48	MarthaH	Fw: The Hotel Bill
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An older lady decided to give herself a big treat for her significant 70th birthday by staying overnight in an expensive hotel.

When she checked out next morning, the desk clerk handed her a bill for \$250.00.

She exploded and demanded to know why the charge was so high. "It's a nice hotel but the rooms certainly aren't worth \$250.00 for just an overnight stay! I didn't even have breakfast."

The clerk told her that \$250.00 is the 'standard rate', so she insisted on speaking to the Manager.

The Manager appeared and, forewarned by the desk clerk, announced: "This hotel has an Olympic-sized pool and a huge conference centre which are available for use."

"But I didn't use them," she said.

"Well, they are here, and you could have," explained the Manager.

He went on to explain that she could also have seen one of the in-hotel shows for which the hotel is famous. "We have the best entertainers from the world over performing here," the Manager said.

"But I didn't go to any of those shows," she said.

"Well, we have them, and you could have," the Manager replied.

No matter what amenity the Manager mentioned, she replied, "But I didn't use it!" and the Manager countered with his standard response.

After several minutes discussion with the Manager unmoved, she decided to pay, wrote a check and gave it to him.

The Manager was surprised when he looked at the check. "But madam, this check is for only \$50.00."

"That's correct. I charged you \$200.00 for sleeping with me," she replied.

"But I didn't!" exclaims the very surprised Manager.

"Well, too bad, I was here, and you could have."

Don't mess with Senior Citizens

20120808-04	08:44	NormF	Re: Proposed Constitutional Amendment: NO SECRET MONEY! (reply to SteveB, FotM Newsletter #197)
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Well, last I checked, no citizen is allowed to withhold information about their finances. (from the government ect...)

20120808-05	10:56	SteveB	Video: "10 Unexplained Scientific Phenomena"
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"10 Unexplained Scientific Phenomena" by MSN

July 25, 2012, (http://www.bing.com/videos/watch/video/10-unexplained-scientific-phenomena/ufdyhk3b?q=All-Time+10s&rel=msn&from=en-us_msnhp&form=MSNRLL)

They've stumped the greatest minds on the planet: presenting 10 phenomena that science has yet to explain.

20120808-06	11:50	SteveB	Fw: MoveOn Action: Become a Movement Maker!
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from MoveOn:

We're getting beat and it's time to wake up.

The unlimited money ushered in by Citizens United means the right wing could outspend progressives 2 to 1 this election—and Romney's just out raised President Obama for the third straight month.¹

Congressional Republicans sabotaged our economic recovery by crashing the debt ceiling and blocking every jobs measure put forward by the president. Republican governors drastically cut jobs, offsetting private sector job gains.

Now Romney is blaming Obama for high unemployment.

Republicans passed Jim Crow style voter suppression laws that will disenfranchise millions of progressive voters, targeting low income folks, people of color, and the young.²

And the worst of it is—we're still asleep. Because despite all this, a Gallup Poll shows that Democrats are much less enthusiastic about voting than Republicans.³ **That means we lose.**

MoveOn members are 7 million strong. We have a proven record of creative, dynamic, and grassroots election campaigning. From launching the most talked about political ads to running the most inventive and effective voter contact programs, **MoveOn can provide the shot in the arm that progressives need right now.**

But to do that we need to double our number of "movement makers"—the members who make a regular monthly donation—from 15,000 to 30,000. **Can you help join the wake up call?**

In past elections MoveOn members funded one of the most covered political ads, for the least money, in history.⁴ We also produced one of the most effective voter contact programs ever studied.⁵ **But with a torrent of 1% money being unleashed, we need to double the impact of our election plan:**

1. Showing America that Mitt Romney is running for President of the 1% through creative ads and daring actions on the ground.
2. Fighting back against Republican voter suppression of the Rising American Electorate—the people of color, single women, and young people who helped elect President Obama in 2008.
3. Making calls, knocking on doors, and using innovative new technology to register and turn out as many progressive voters as humanly possible.

Just imagine taking everything we can do together and doubling it. That's what our goal of reaching 30,000 movement makers is all about. For a small regular donation each month you can become a MoveOn movement maker and make that happen.

Yes, I'll chip in \$5 each month and become a movement maker: <https://pol.moveon.org/donate/forward.html>.

No, but I can make a one-time donation: <https://pol.moveon.org/donate/donate.html>.

Contributing to any cause or community of people, especially making a regular contribution, is an act of great trust and faith. Today you can place your faith in a community of 7 million fellow MoveOn members and **trust that your contribution will help empower their passion, commitment, and energy.**

Thanks for all you do. –Justin, Emily, Victoria, Robin, and the rest of the team

Sources:

¹"GOP groups plan record \$1 billion blitz," Politico, May 30, 2012
<http://www.politico.com/news/stories/0512/76849.html>.

"Romney's July fundraising outpaces Obama's," *The Washington Post*, August 6, 2012
<http://www.moveon.org/r?r=278396&id=48295-20195165-5PWHVwx&t=6>.

²"New Voting Restrictions May Affect More than Five Million," Brennan Center for Justice at New York University School of Law, October 3, 2011. <http://www.moveon.org/r?r=276600&id=48295-20195165-5PWHVwx&t=7>.

³"Where's the Outrage?" *The New York Times*, October 3, 2011. <http://www.moveon.org/r?r=278237&id=48295-20195165-5PWHVwx&t=8>.

⁴"Censored at the Super Bowl," *Newsweek*, January 29, 2004
<http://www.moveon.org/r?r=277117&id=&t=8&id=48295-20195165-5PWHVwx&t=9>.

⁵"MoveOn and Voter Mobilization in 2004," Institution for Social and Policy Studies, 2006
<http://gotv.research.yale.edu/?q=node/50>.

20120808-07 12:37 SteveB "America's 10 Largest Corporations Paid 9 Percent Average Tax Rate Last Year"

"America's 10 Largest Corporations Paid 9 Percent Average Tax Rate Last Year" by Travis Waldron, Think Progress/NationofChange

Aug. 8, 2012, (<http://www.nationofchange.org/america-s-10-largest-corporations-paid-9-percent-average-tax-rate-last-year-1344433945>)

America's 10 most profitable corporations paid an average corporate income tax rate of just 9 percent in 2011, according to a study from financial site NerdWallet reported by the Huffington Post. The 10 companies include Wall Street banks like Wells Fargo and JP Morgan Chase, oil companies like ExxonMobil and Chevron, and tech companies like Apple, IBM, and Microsoft.

The two companies with the lowest tax rates were both oil companies. ExxonMobil paid \$1.5 billion in taxes on \$73.3 billion in earnings, a tax rate of 2 percent. Chevron's tax rate was just 4 percent. None of the companies paid anywhere near the 35 percent top corporate tax rate, providing more evidence to debunk claims that America's corporate tax rate is stunting economic growth and job creation (Despite the high marginal rate, American corporations pay one of the lowest effective corporate tax rates in the world).

The study also calculated the overall amount the companies owed in both domestic and foreign taxes. This includes deferred taxes that will, theoretically, be paid in the future, once the companies bring foreign profits back to the United States. Apple, for instance, avoided \$2.4 billion in American taxes last year by utilizing offshore tax havens.

If Republicans have their way, however, those deferred taxes may never be paid. Switching to a territorial tax system, a policy leading Republicans have considered, would allow corporations to repatriate foreign profits back to the United States nearly free of taxation, costing the country billions of dollars and thousands of jobs.

20120808-08 13:45 Art Re: Lying Socialist Thieves (reply to Tom, FotM Newsletter #199)

Well I see nothing wrong with what you suggest but the difference is anyone seeking appointment to higher office in the Federal Government is required to release tax returns. Romney's father set the example and all serious contenders since, to include President Obama, have followed that excellent precedent. I'm not sure about the relevance of these other items. There are no "passport records" to my knowledge, just a passport that has stamped entry's. I have a few dozen passports now from over the years with several hundred entries. What would it tell you?. Not sure either how college transcripts would help. He went to Harvard and that has never been in question. As for Law Review papers, what would be the point? If you want to bore yourself to death, I can provide you my Masters Thesis, but it is not a pain I would normally wish anyone.

These tax returns just make sense.

20120808-09 14:24 SteveB Bolivian Bakery Biz — Update

We're moving along on the cookie front, but we're a little stuck right now waiting for the gas line to be connected from the street to our meter. It should happen by tomorrow, Friday. Meanwhile, we're continuing to work on licenses, taxes, packaging, etc. We also are getting the hood and exhaust system for the oven spec'ed and finding a contractor for the operation. As soon as we bake our first cookie in-house, we have to start hiring people. We plan on having a small army of independent salesmen/vendors.

Almost all the equipment was delivered last week—our big 300-cookie oven, 30-quart mixer, commercial refrigerator, granite-topped counter, stainless-steel tables, carts to hold the big cookie sheets, and cookie baking and cooling sheets. We still need our tables, chairs, and stools for customers and sales meetings. Our plate glass door and the window next to it had to be removed so the oven could be brought in. Our sign painter came and did his work, then our "real" sign was delivered and installed. We think it's perfect!

Construction about finished.



Marci and part of our work crew.



Sign painter.



Snickers-Doodle at night.



Glass removal for oven delivery.



20120808-10 16:21 SteveB "Another Bad Day for R0mney"

"Another Bad Day For R0mney" by Joe Klein, *Time*

Aug. 7, 2012, (<http://swampland.time.com/2012/08/07/another-bad-day-for-romney/>)

The theme of the day for the Romney campaign was, as Alex Rogers notes below, that Obama's Soft on Welfare. It sort of flopped. The factoid planted at the microscopic center of the non-story is that the Obama campaign allegedly granted states the right to request waivers from the current welfare work requirements...which is true, except for the following things:

1. The waivers would be granted only if states came up with *alternative ideas* to create jobs for people on welfare.
2. As governor of Massachusetts, Romney himself asked for such a waiver in 2005.

And, this third bit is just too good...

3. As governor, Romney offered welfare recipients free auto insurance, registration, inspections and memberships in AAA. From the original *Boston Herald* piece:

"Over 80 percent of participants have moved off of welfare," said Romney spokeswoman Gail Gitcho.

Under Romney's Car Ownership Program, the state paid out one year's insurance, inspection, excise tax, title, registration, repairs and a AAA membership for cars that were donated to welfare recipients. Under the plan, those who lost their jobs and ended up back on welfare were allowed to keep their free wheels.

Now, let me make two points:

1. This Romney—the guy who invented what the *Herald* called “Welfare Wheels”—is the same guy who launched on Rick Perry during the primaries for offering college scholarships to the children of illegal immigrants. In fact, he’s still against—maybe, I guess, but we can’t be too sure, because, well, he’s refusing to answer the question—the federal Dream Act, which would grant citizenship to such children who graduated college or served into the military. But cars for welfare recipients was, somehow, just fine. (By the way, I applaud Romney’s program and congratulate him on the 80% success rate.)

2. **How incompetent is the Romney campaign?** They keep coming up with these stupid gambits—the last was the lie that Obama opposed early voting for members of the military in Ohio—that are shot down instantaneously (everywhere but in Fox-Rush land). And worse, the Democrats—who seem to have a superior oppo team—can often produce counter-stories, like the Herald item, that make things even worse for Romney.

But there is a larger question here: How stupid does he think we are? Every day brings a mind-boggling act of untruth-telling. Last week, he told Sean Hannity that his economic plan “is very similar to the Simpson-Bowles plan.” Except for the fact that Simpson-Bowles raised \$2 trillion in revenue over the next 10 years and Romney’s plan raises...well, he won’t say, but so far he hasn’t identified one red cent. **I can’t remember a candidate so brazenly allergic to facts. What a travesty.**

[20120808-11](#)

16:28

SteveG

“Company Previously Known as Blackwater Agrees to \$7.5 Million Fine in Arms Smuggling Case”

“Company Previously Known as Blackwater Agrees to \$7.5 Million Fine in Arms Smuggling Case” by AP

Aug. 7, 2012, (http://www.washingtonpost.com/business/company-previously-known-as-blackwater-agrees-to-75-million-fine-in-arms-smuggling-case/2012/08/07/0180ea68-e0d5-11e1-8d48-2b1243f34c85_story.html?fb_ref=sm_btn_fb)

(RALEIGH, N.C.) The international security contractor formerly known as Blackwater has agreed to pay a \$7.5 million fine to settle federal criminal charges related to arms smuggling and other crimes.

Documents unsealed Tuesday in a U.S. District Court in North Carolina said the company, now called Academi LLC, agreed to pay the fine as part of a deferred prosecution agreement to settle 17 violations.

Treasury sent a letter to British regulators that shows what many sources have already confirmed: there is a much broader probe of the London-based bank under way.

The list of violations includes possessing automatic weapons in the United States without registration, lying to federal firearms regulators about weapons provided to the king of Jordan, passing secret plans for armored personnel carriers to Sweden and Denmark without U.S. government approval and illegally shipping body armor overseas.

Federal prosecutors and law enforcement agents said the company, which has held billions in U.S. security contracts in Iraq and Afghanistan, repeatedly flouted U.S. laws.

“Compliance with these laws is critical to the proper conduct of our defense efforts and to international diplomatic relations,” said Thomas G. Walker, the U.S. Attorney for the Eastern District of North Carolina. “This prosecution is an important step to ensuring that our corporate citizens comply with these rules in every circumstance.”

Blackwater was founded in 1997 in Moyock, N.C., by former Navy SEAL Erik Prince, but the company rose to national attention after winning massive no-bid security contracts from the U.S. government at the beginning of the Iraq War.

In 2004, Iraqi insurgents in Fallujah ambushed two SUVs, killing the four armed Blackwater contractors and hanging their bodies from a bridge. In 2007, Blackwater contractors guarding a U.S. State Department convoy in Baghdad opened fire on civilian vehicles in an intersection, mistakenly thinking they were under attack. Seventeen Iraqis died.

In 2010, the company reached a \$42 million settlement with the Department of State as part of a settlement of violations of the Arms Export Control Act and the International Trafficking in Arms Regulations.

The company changed its name to Xe before being sold in 2011, becoming Academi.

Documents unsealed in federal court Thursday say prosecutors brought 17 criminal charges against Academi following a 5-year investigation.

Under the terms of the deferred prosecution agreement, the company acknowledged "responsibility for the conduct" in the 17 alleged violations and settles all charges with the government in exchange for payment of the \$7.5 million fine and assurances the company will reform its conduct. The agreement also requires future monitoring and audits for full compliance with federal firearms laws.

In a statement issued immediately after the settlement was made public, however, Academi officials denied they admitted any guilt for what was termed a "legacy matter."

"The agreement, which does not involve any guilty plea or admit to any violations, reflects the significant and tangible efforts that Academi's new ownership and leadership team have made," the statement said. "The company is fully committed to this agreement and looks forward to successfully fulfilling its obligations on this legacy matter as we continue to lead by example in our regulatory and compliance efforts."

Academi spokesman John Procter later clarified the company's position.

"There is a distinction between an admission of events taking place and an admission of guilt," he said.

Treasury sent a letter to British regulators that shows what many sources have already confirmed: there is a much broader probe of the London-based bank under way.

A clause in Academi's settlement with prosecutors bars the company from making any public statements "contradicting any aspect" of the agreement. Any such statement could allow the government to nullify the settlement, the agreement says.

Justice Department spokeswoman Robin G. Zier declined to comment Thursday on whether Academi's media release violated the terms of the settlement.

The first two criminal counts unsealed Tuesday allege Blackwater illegally exported encrypted satellite phones to Sudan in 2005. Counts three through six involve numerous arms exporting and trafficking violations, including providing a security services and a threat assessment to Sudan, providing military training to Canadian military and law enforcement personnel without a required U.S. license.

The company is also alleged to have provided technical and engineering data relating to the construction of armored personnel carriers to Sweden and Denmark from 2006 to 2008 without required State Department authorization. In 2004 and 2006, the company exported ammunition and body armor to Iraq and Afghanistan without first obtaining a U.S. government license, according to the documents.

Counts seven through 12 allege violations of various federal firearms laws as the result of the company's possession of unregistered automatic weapons at its rural North Carolina training facility. Counts 13 through 17 allege involve a Bushmaster M4 carbine, three Glock handguns and a Remington shotgun given as a gift to Jordan's King Abdullah II and his traveling entourage during a 2005 visit to Moyock.

"For an extended period of time, Academi/Blackwater operated in a manner which demonstrated systemic disregard for U.S. Government laws and regulations," said Chris Briese, Special Agent in Charge of the Charlotte Division of the FBI. "Today's announcement should serve as a warning to others that allegations of wrongdoing will be aggressively investigated."

Comment from msmart2u

The Supreme Court says corporations are people. Well, if I engage in the same sort of criminal activity that Blackwater engaged in, I get fined and go to jail for a long time. Corporations like Blackwater just have to pay a fine. How is this fair? **They should be fined and jailed.**

20120808-13	17:59	SteveB	Re: "Company Previously Known as Blackwater Agrees to \$7.5 Million Fine..." (reply to SteveG, above)
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I don't think these Blackwater guys are ever going to get clean. I guess, with a name like that (oh, ya, they changed it), it would be hard.

Did you run into them in Iraq, Art or Tom?

Our cat, Mio (one of his aliases), worked for Blackwater in Iraq. Believe me, he has some stories!

20120808-18	19:11	SteveG	Re: "Company Previously Known as Blackwater Agrees to \$7.5 Million Fine..." (reply to SteveB, above)
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When I was in high school, maybe college, I remember reading about mercenaries and how bad they were and how disgusting it was that some countries resorted to that type of warfare.

20120808-12	18:04	Dennis	"A Devil's Dictionary"
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Here's your opportunity to update your political terminology:

"A Devil's Dictionary" by Mike Lofgren, Viking Press Book Excerpt, Truthout

Aug. 8, 2012, (<http://truth-out.org/opinion/item/10739-mike-lofgren-a-devils-dictionary>)

Here's a new book based on an exclusive Truthout commentary that became a national media sensation. Inside the front cover, publisher Viking Press (Penguin) even mentions that this bombshell insider's view of Capitol Hill began as a professional and personal confession that "was posted on Truthout and read by millions." Receive a copy of Mike Lofgren's *The Party Is Over* by making a minimum contribution to Truthout by clicking here:

<https://members.truth-out.org/bgift94-gift/choose-type-donation>.

Lee, Bernays, and Gingrich have all had a lasting impact on the political use of language in America. If you seek monuments to their accomplishments, you have to look no further than your daily paper or television news program. It is to them that we owe stories about "collateral damage" rather than "dead civilians." In that spirit, allow me to offer up my own devil's dictionary of contempo-rary American political terms.

American exceptionalism: a doctrine whose proponents hold that by divine dispensation America is exempt from all laws gov-erning international norms, physics, or rationality.

Authentic: used to describe a candidate who is unaware of current events and doesn't read a newspaper, and is proud of it.

Class warfare: a technique by which teachers, nurses, firemen, and cashiers are believed to be oppressing derivatives traders and CEOs, which includes unreasonably complaining that their wages aren't keeping up with the cost of their health insurance.

Conservative: a person profoundly respectful of heritage, tradition, and old-fashioned values while preaching the revolution and strip-mining the Grand Canyon for high-sulfur coal.

Darwin's theory of evolution: an evil doctrine that denies the teachings of the Bible. Social Darwinism, on the other hand, is what made America great and is perfectly consistent with the Sermon on the Mount.

Elites: insufferable, overeducated snobs who are not real Americans and may in fact be French. Mitt Romney (Harvard MBA and JD) and George W. Bush (Yale, Harvard) have often criticized such scoundrels.

Empower: If an American worker loses his pension or Social Security, he is empowered.

Free-market capitalism: the economic system by which Halliburton gets sole-source, cost-plus government contracts.

Global warming: a hoax perpetrated by a worldwide conspiracy of biased scientists. Fortunately it is being combated by right-wing foundations, oil companies, televangelists, and other disinterested believers in objective fact.

Job creators: the truly creative engines of economic growth in our society: real-estate flippers, mortgage-backed securities bundlers, leveraged buyout specialists, dividend drawers, and hedge-fund billionaires.

Level playing field: what every lobbyist wants in the spirit of fairness. The only way to achieve it is by bribing politicians to award a sole-source contract to his client.

Liberal (pronounced libull): a satanic ideologue who is at once a socialist leveler, an elitist defender of privilege, an atheist, and a secret Muslim determined to bring sharia law to America.

Patriot: someone who loves America more than he loves the majority of the people living therein.

Populist: an advocate for the interests of "real" Americans who vehemently fights for the abolition of all government regulation of Wall Street investment banks.

Prolife: the unconditional support of the first nine months of a human being's existence. After that period has expired, the same human being has an unconditional right to be executed by the state, sent off to war, or die without health insurance.

Real Americans: the minority of Americans who look, think, and act exactly as I do.

Rogue state: a country that violates international law by committing armed aggression, torturing prisoners, assassinating opponents, and possessing weapons of mass destruction. cf: american exceptionalism

Sharia law: a fundamentalist religious doctrine imposed on a given political jurisdiction. Any resemblance to public statutes on abortion in the Commonwealth of Virginia is purely coincidental.

Take our country back: Give us what we want right now, even if we don't know what it is.

Tea Party: people covered by Medicare who hate socialized medicine.

Washington spending: the bad sort of spending that doesn't go toward earmarks to campaign contributors, subsidies to big oil, or the military's half-trillion-dollar budget. Everyone knows the Pentagon is across the Potomac in Virginia, not in Washington.

Win-win situation: see level playing field.

(Reprinted by arrangement with Viking, a member of the Penguin Group (USA) Inc., from *The Party Is Over* by Mike Lofgren.)

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20120808-15	18:05	SteveB	Re: "A Devil's Dictionary" (reply to Dennis, above)
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Very funny stuff!

20120808-14	18:11	Dennis	"Preparing to Fail"
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Military affairs...

"Preparing to Fail" by Bill Bonner, The Daily Reckoning

Aug. 8, 2012, (<http://dailyreckoning.com/preparing-to-fail/>)

(PARIS) Gore Vidal, veteran of WWII, died last week. Here's something he wrote in 2003:

I can recall thinking, when I got out of the Army in 1946, "Well, that's that. We won. And those who come after us will never need do this again." Then came the two mad wars of imperial vanity — Korea and Vietnam. They were bitter for us, not to mention for the so-called enemy. Next we were enrolled in a perpetual war against what seemed to be the enemy-of-the-month club. This war kept major revenues going to military procurement and secret police, while withholding money from us, the taxpayers, with our petty concerns for life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.

He might have added another petty concern: national solvency.

And still another: military preparedness.

Today, the US has no worthy enemies. Still, it spends \$1 trillion a year — fully loaded — to defend itself against them. The 'terrorists' and 'insurgents' it protects us against have no divisions, no trained officers, no heavy armor, no ships, no aircraft, and no heavy weapons. That is why the news from the front is so boring; the newspapers barely report it. There are no pitched battles. No Napoleonic charges. No breathtaking victories. No Stalingrads. No Gettysburgs. No brilliant strategies. No crushing defeats.

Oh, for another battle of Kursk! It was the greatest land battle in history...a tank battle pitting the Germans' Tigers and Panzers — about 3,000 of them — against the Soviet's T-34s, of which there were about 5,000 in the area. The Germans' tanks had greater range. But the Soviets' tanks were faster...and there were more of them. Wehrmacht forces numbered almost half a million men. For their part, the Soviets had 1.5 million soldiers. The ground was firm. The sky was clear. Both sides fielded experienced, battle-hardened troops.

This was a monster slugfest. Too bad both monsters couldn't lose!

It was a battle on a scale the world never saw before...or since. You already know how it ended. The Soviets had many advantages. First, they had the German's battle plans. They knew where they would strike. So, they built 8 defensive lines...including tank traps and minefields...which slowed the attackers down and wore them out. Second, the Soviets had shorter supply lines. They could rush more troops and equipment to the front much more easily than their enemy. Third, they had a huge superiority in men and machines.

Most important, after the defeat at Stalingrad, the gods of war had gone over to the other side. The momentum of the war had quickly turned against the 1,000-year Reich. Christmas fruitcake would last longer.

Even if the Germans had won the battle of Kursk, they would have gained little. It would have been an empty victory; there was no way to follow up. They lacked the forces to launch another big offensive into the Soviet heartland.

The Germans were on the defensive everywhere. They had already lost North Africa and now they were losing Italy too. A huge invasion of France, though still a year away, was inevitable.

If they had been smarter, they would have renounced their agenda of conquest, taken all their troops back to Germany itself — as fast as possible — begging forgiveness and promising never to set foot beyond the Rhine or the Oder ever again. Maybe there they could put up enough of a fight to force an end to the war without being totally annihilated.

Instead, Hitler had given orders to hold ground everywhere. The Battle of Kursk was intended to give the Germans time. Time to what? Time to lose on a bigger scale!

If only the US had been on the scene; it might have learned something. The US was not involved in that battle. Which is probably a good thing, since its tank crews were inexperienced, and its tanks inferior; US forces probably would have been wiped out, no matter which side they backed.

But now, 70 years later, the US is prepared for the battle. It has 2,300 M1 Abrams tanks in service around the world...and another 3,000 just sitting around in the desert awaiting orders. These tanks are super-big, super-heavy, super sophisticated with super firepower...and super expensive. They can turn an entire building into a pile of rubble from 2 and a half miles away.

On today's battlefields, if you can call them that, the M1 Abrams is in a class of its own. None were knocked out of action in the Iraq war by enemy tanks. The main threat to the M1 turned out to be friendly fire and IEDs — homemade explosives.

Unlike WWII, when the US had the 16th largest army in the world, smaller than Rumania, this time the US is prepared. But preparedness is like everything else under the sun. It soon reaches the point of declining marginal utility. When you reach that level, the more prepared you get the less prepared you are.

That point was probably reached some 110 years ...at least 500 billion dollars... and perhaps 5,000 M1s ago. In the 1890s, Teddy Roosevelt had so much preparedness he used it to wallop 200,000 Filipinos. As for the half a trillion dollars, it's the part of current 'security' spending — *grosso modo* — which has nothing to do with defense and everything to do with giving offense to civilized people all over the globe, which is what got Gore Vidal worked up.

No need to get indignant about it. That's just the way the gods of war amuse themselves. They encourage dim militarists to spend themselves into bankruptcy, preparing for a war the nation will never again fight. Which is why the M1 story is important.

The maker of the M1 Abrams is General Dynamics. When the Pentagon announced that it would like to stop spending money on the M1, the company was justifiably upset. It had spent millions to buy key members of Congress. It expected to get a good return on its investment.

For its part, the Pentagon thought it could save a little money by putting off refurbishment of the tanks for a few years. This would save \$3 billion, admittedly chicken feed, but it would also give it time to redesign the beast for what it imagines might be future combat.

But lobbyists got on the case, apparently timing their campaign donations to correspond with key decision points. Lydia Mulvany reports on what happened next:

After putting the tank money back in the budget then, both the House and Senate Armed Services Committees have authorized it again this year, allotting \$181 million in the House and \$91 million in the Senate. If the company and its supporters prevail, the Army will refurbish what Army chief of staff Ray Odierno described in a February hearing as "280 tanks that we simply do not need.

Mr. Odiero says the M1 is a relic of an earlier age of warfare. It would have been great — maybe — at Kursk. But when the enemy has no tanks, it is merely an expensive — and vulnerable — pile of metal.

Said Mr. Odiero at a February hearing:

We don't believe we'll ever see a straight conventional conflict again in the future.

Which is why the M1 is perfect. At least to the Law of Declining Marginal Utility.

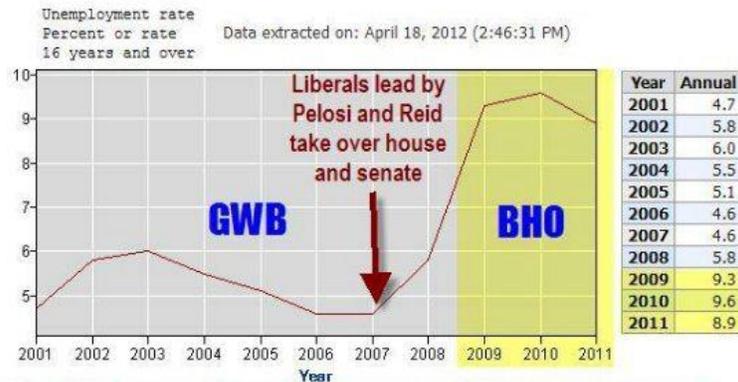
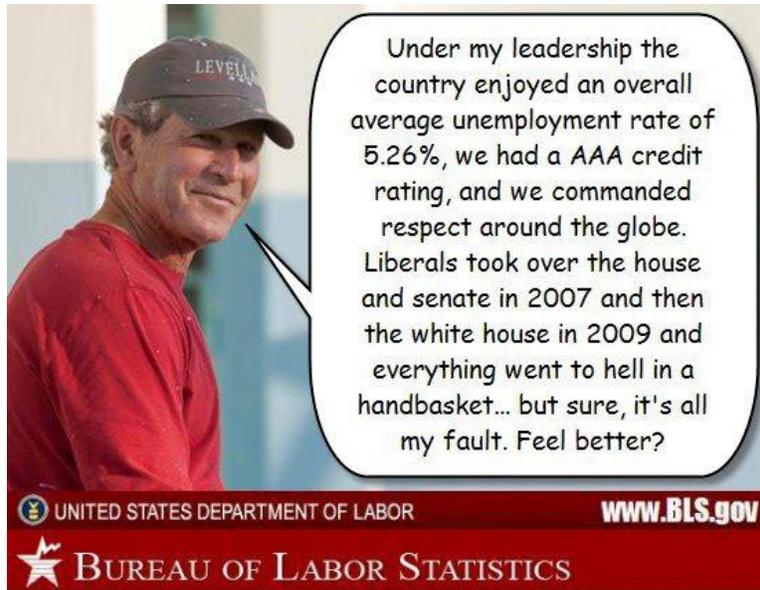
It allows the military industry to spend billions while actually making itself less able to fight the wars of the future.

[20120808-16](#) 18:35 SteveB Re: "Preparing to Fail" (reply to Dennis, above)

Cool article!

[20120808-17](#) 19:08 SteveG Re: "Preparing to Fail" (reply to Dennis, above)

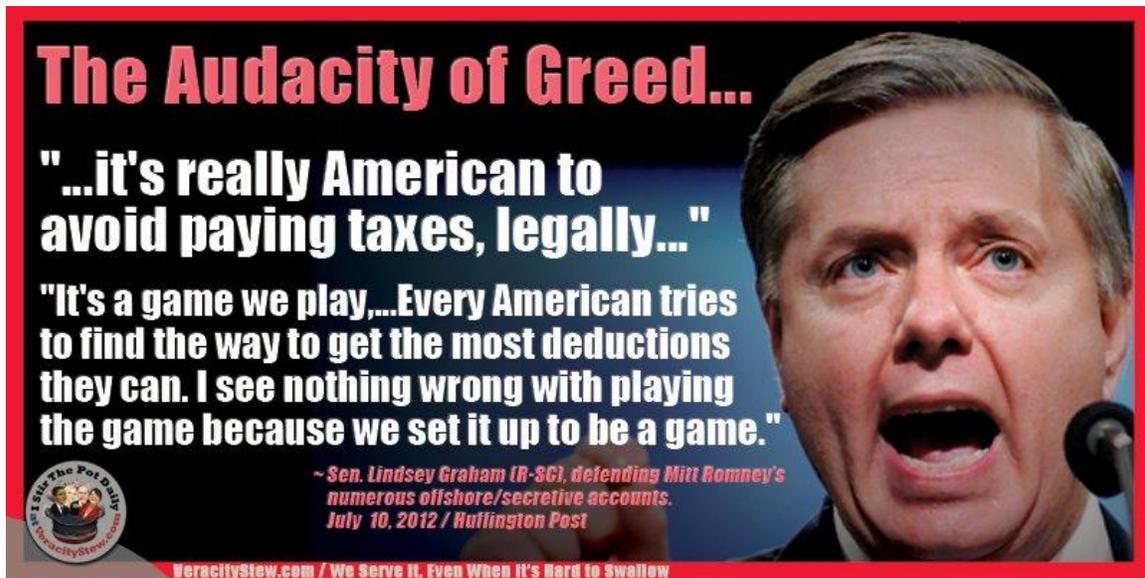
Thanks Dennis, I feel much better now.



Did Obama inherit a mess? Well, let's see...

GWB average overall unemployment **BHO**
5.26% **9.27%**

[Have you ever looked at the pattern of how unemployment statistics look during and after a serious economic crash? I'm sure GWB has. BHO has done wonderfully, despite the constant obstruction of people dedicated to the failure of America. One other point, BHO did NOT take office mid-way through 2008, as shown on your graph, but in Jan., 2009, at a point where **your graph clearly proves that GWB was responsible for nearly all the unemployment—DIRECTLY!** During his watch! But that does not resolve GWB of responsibility for what happened afterwards due to the huge inertia of something as big as the U.S. economy. The dude (GWB) drove us off the cliff! Have you forgotten already? The rest of us have not! —SteveB]



The Audacity of Greed...

"...it's really American to avoid paying taxes, legally..."

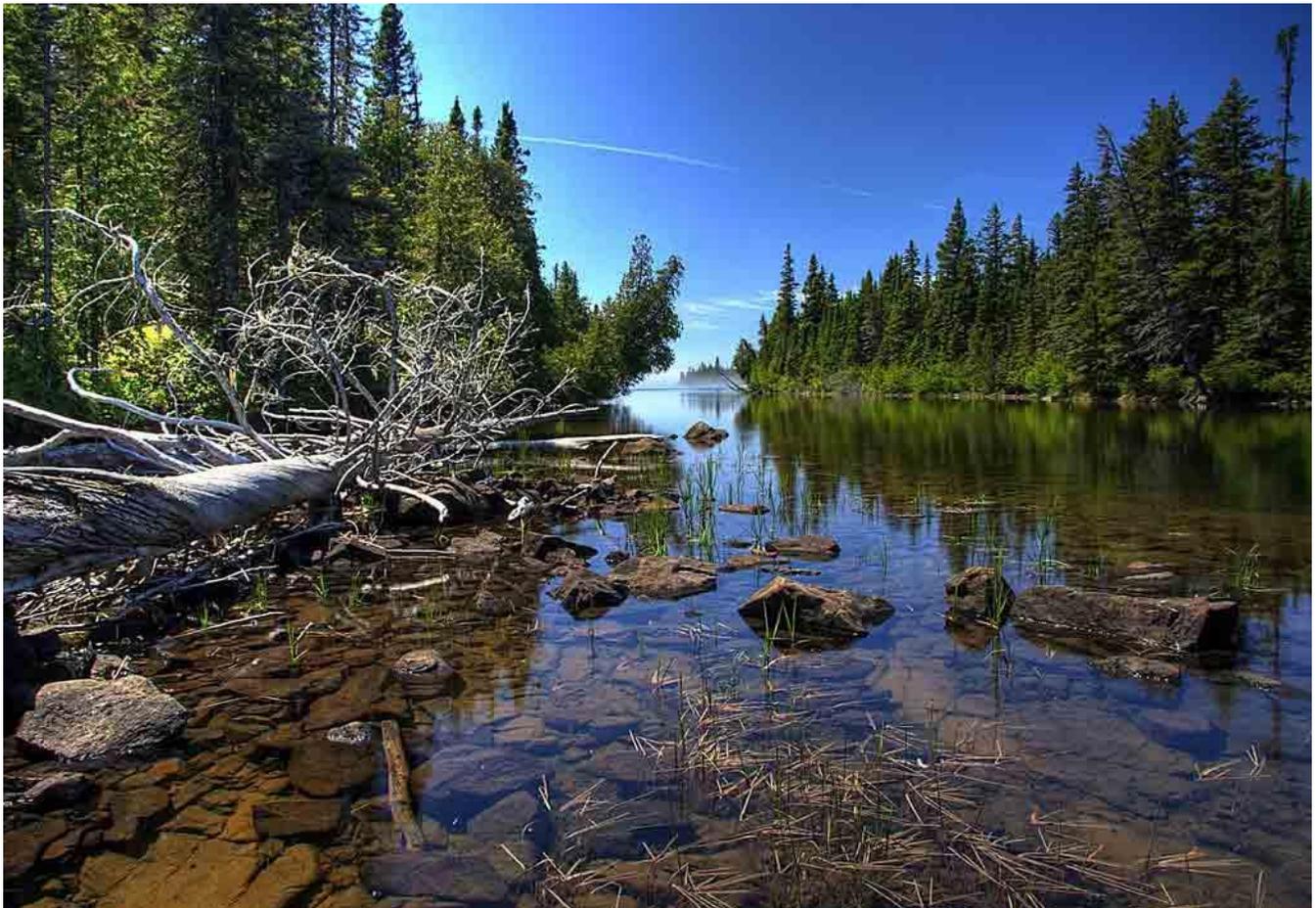
"It's a game we play,...Every American tries to find the way to get the most deductions they can. I see nothing wrong with playing the game because we set it up to be a game."

*~ Sen. Lindsey Graham (R-SC), defending Mitt Romney's numerous offshore/secretive accounts.
July 10, 2012 / Huffington Post*

VeracityStew.com / We Serve It, Even When It's Hard to Swallow

Let's Take The Pot Outta VeracityStew.com

<http://www.guideoftravels.com/isle-royale-national-park.html>



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

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<http://www.FriendsOfTheMiddle.org>
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FRIENDS OF THE MIDDLE NEWSLETTER #201 — AUG. 10, 2012

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

INDEX: Click here.

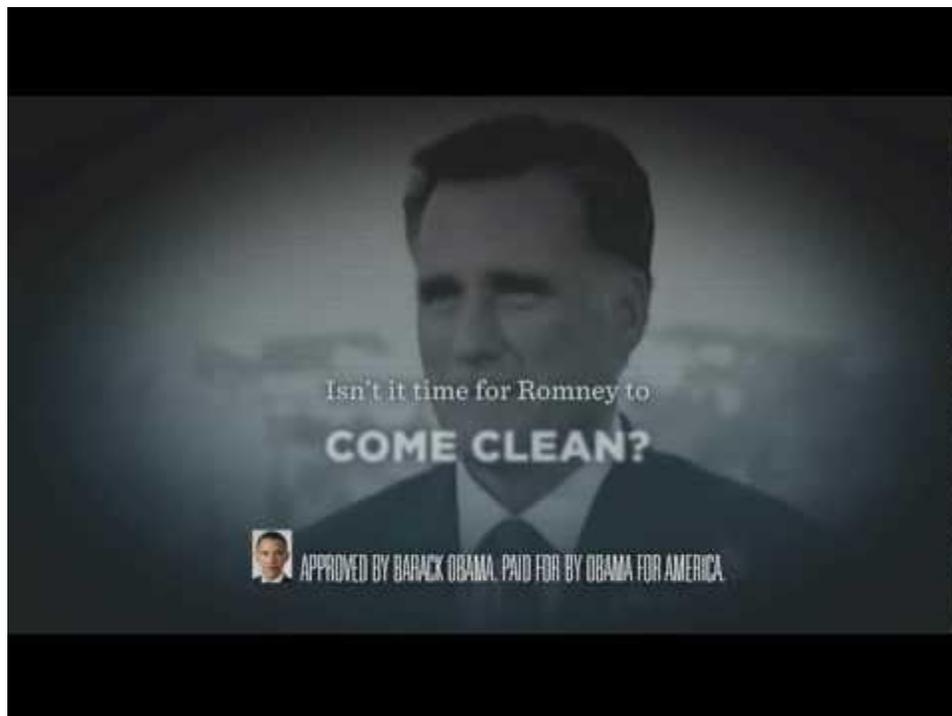
Mitt the Tax Cheater?

(posted by Steven W. Baker / SteveB, Aug. 10, 2012)

You know...all the dude has to do is tell the truth and produce his tax returns. The new FOX polls show President Obama opening a 9 point lead on R0mney. Maybe the reason is that people are fed-up with R0mney's "raping and pillaging" style of capitalism? Maybe people are fed-up with the fat cats avoiding paying the taxes the middle-class has to pay? If Republicans think this is going to go away...LOL!

"Obama Campaign Ad Speculates Mitt Romney Might Have Paid Nothing in Taxes" by Luke Johnson, Huffington Post
Aug. 9, 2012, (http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/08/09/obama-ad-mitt-romney-taxes_n_1761784.html)

Video: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DABbkpHzg3o&feature=player_embedded



A new ad released by the Obama campaign Thursday suggests that Mitt Romney might have paid nothing in taxes at some point. The ad plays a clip of a recent interview in which Romney said he was "happy to go back and look" to see if he had paid a rate lower than 13.9 percent -- but he never did get back to the voters on that.

"Did Romney pay 10 percent in taxes? 5 percent? Zero?" asks a narrator. "We don't know."

The campaign says the ad is "following" Romney through Virginia, North Carolina, Florida and Ohio next week.

Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid (D-Nev.) recently ignited a firestorm of criticism by saying, in an interview with The Huffington Post, that a Bain investor had told him that Romney paid no taxes for 10 years. The presumptive GOP nominee has refused to release his tax returns for the years before 2010 despite bipartisan calls for him to do so.

"Did Romney Enable a Company's Abusive Tax Shelter?" by Peter C. Canellos and Edward D. Kleinbard, CNN

Aug. 9, 2012, (<http://edition.cnn.com/2012/08/08/opinion/canellos-kleinbard-romney-taxes/index.html>)

When Mitt Romney was audit chair at Marriott International, the company engaged in a series of abusive tax shelter activities.

(Editor's note: Peter C. Canellos, a lawyer, is former chair of the New York State Bar Association Tax Section. Edward D. Kleinbard is a professor at Gould School of Law at the University of Southern California. He is the former chief of staff of Congress's Joint Committee on Taxation.)

Mitt Romney's refusal to release tax returns in the critical years of his income accumulation has done little to dispel the legitimate concern that arises from hints buried in his scant disclosure to date: Did he augment his wealth through highly aggressive tax stratagems of questionable validity?

One relevant line of inquiry, largely ignored so far, is to examine what exists in the public record regarding his attitude toward tax compliance and tax avoidance. While this examination is hampered because his dealings through his private equity company, Bain Capital, are kept shrouded, there are other indicators.

A key troubling public manifestation of Romney's apparent insensitivity to tax obligations is his role in Marriott International's abusive tax shelter activity, as previously reported by Jesse Drucker in Bloomberg.

Romney has had a close, long-standing, personal and business connection with Marriott International and its founders. He served as a member of the Marriott board of directors for many years. From 1993 to 1998, Romney was the head of the audit committee of the Marriott board.

During that period, Marriott engaged in a series of complex and high-profile maneuvers, including "Son of Boss," a notoriously abusive prepackaged tax shelter that investment banks and accounting firms marketed to corporations such as Marriott. In this respect, Marriott was in the vanguard of a then-emerging corporate tax shelter bubble that substantially undermined the entire corporate tax system.

Son of Boss and its related shelters represented perhaps the largest tax avoidance scheme in history, costing the U.S. many billions in lost corporate tax revenues. In response, the government initiated legal challenges that resulted in complete disallowance of the losses claimed by Marriott and other corporations.

In addition, the Son of Boss transaction was listed by the Internal Revenue Service as an abusive transaction, requiring specific disclosure and subject to heavy penalties. Statutory penalties were also made more stringent to deter future tax shelter activity. Finally, the government brought successful criminal prosecutions against a number of individuals involved in Son of Boss and related transactions not associated with Marriott, including principals at major law and accounting firms.

In his key role as chairman of the Marriott board's audit committee, Romney approved the firm's reporting of fictional tax losses exceeding \$70 million generated by its Son of Boss transaction. His endorsement of this stratagem provides insight into Romney's professional ethics and attitude toward tax compliance obligations.

Like other prepackaged corporate tax shelters of that era, Marriott's Son of Boss transaction was an entirely artificial transaction, bearing no relationship to its business. Its sole purpose was to create a gigantic tax loss out of thin air without any economic risk, cost or loss -- other than the fee Marriott paid the promoter.

The Son of Boss transaction was vulnerable to attack on at least two grounds.

First, the transaction's promoters and consumers relied on a strained technical statutory analysis. Second, the Son of Boss deal violated the fundamental tax principle that the tax law ignores transactions unless they have a motivating business purpose and a substantial nontax economic effect.

In the Marriott case, the IRS raised both arguments and won on the first interpretive issue.

The Court of Claims (affirmed by the Court of Appeals) rejected Marriott's technical analysis, finding no reliable argument or authority to support it. The court therefore did not need to reach the issue of business purpose and economic substance. In subsequent decisions, involving similar transactions but other parties, the courts have sustained the second line of attack as well, finding the claimed losses to be fictitious.

The complete judicial rejection of the Son of Boss tax scheme was entirely predictable. In mid-1994, for example, roughly contemporaneously with Marriott's execution of its Son of Boss trade and well before Marriott filed its return claiming the artificial loss, the highly respected Tax Section of the New York Bar Association filed a public comment with the U.S. Treasury and IRS urging rejection of the technical claims made by promoters of such schemes.

In his key position as head of the board's audit committee, Romney was required under the securities laws and his fiduciary duties to review the transaction. In fact, it has been publicly reported that Romney was the Marriott Board member most acquainted with the transaction and to whom the other board members turned for advice. This makes sense because aggressive tax-driven financial engineering was a large part of what Romney (and Bain) did for a living. For these reasons, it is fair to hold him accountable for Marriott's spurious tax reporting.

Romney's campaign staff has attempted to deflect responsibility, arguing that he relied on Marriott's tax department and advisers.

This claim is disingenuous. In a transaction of this magnitude, sensitivity and questionableness, the prudent step would be to secure advice to the audit committee and the board from experienced and independent tax counsel, who would certainly have cautioned that the Marriott position was risky and not supported by precedent or proper statutory interpretation.

Moreover, on the key issue of the business purpose and economic substance, Romney was, or should have been, aware of the facts that the transaction had its genesis solely in tax avoidance and was a "marketed" tax shelter.

He had an insider's perspective on the motivation and lack of substance in the transaction, as well as the financial sophistication to understand the tax avoidance involved. Romney failed in his duties to Marriott and its shareholders and acted to undermine the fairness of the tax system.

No one could accuse Romney of lacking the intelligence and analytical skills to have dealt with this transaction appropriately. Indeed, his strengths in this regard were the reason the other board members relied on him.

What emerges from this window into corporate tax compliance behavior is the picture of an executive who was willing to go to the edge, if not beyond, to bend the rules to seek an unfair advantage, and then hide behind the advice of so-called experts to deflect criticism when a scheme backfires.

[20120809-01](#) 11:33 SteveB Fw: Daily Kos Petition: Ask Democrats in 'Safe' Districts to Help Other Democrats!

from Daily Kos:

Join with Daily Kos and Democracy for America by signing our petition telling the House Democrats in ultra-safe districts who have stockpiled more than \$63 million to start sending some of that money to progressive Democrats in swing districts.

Democrats have a good chance to retake the House of Representatives, with eight polls in the last month showing them either ahead or tied. Still, the current Democratic lead is tenuous because negative ads from Republican Super PACs will only increase as the election approaches.

Fortunately, there is a way to counter this coming onslaught of corporate cash. There are nearly 100 House Democrats in very safe districts who collectively have more than \$63 million in their campaign bank accounts. If these Democrats started sending some of that money to campaigns in swing districts, they would provide the financial support needed to send John Boehner and the tea party packing.

We know pushing these Democrats can work, because we've done it before. Back in 2006, our grassroots pressure resulted in ultra-safe Democrats sending millions of dollars to battleground districts, thus playing an important role in Democrats retaking the House that year.

We can do it again in 2012, but we need to start now. **Please, click here to tell ultra-safe House Democrats to stop hoarding cash and step up their support for progressive Democrats in swing districts:**

<http://democracyforamerica.com/activities/815?t=dkos>

Keep fighting, Chris Bowers Campaign Director, Daily Kos

[20120809-02](#) 13:12 SteveM "Obama Campaign Aide Accused of Lying Over Anti-Romney Ad, Ties to Steelworker"

"Obama Campaign Aide Accused of Lying Over Anti-Romney Ad, Ties to Steelworker" by Judson Berger, FOX News

Aug. 8, 2012, (<http://www.foxnews.com/politics/2012/08/08/obama-campaign-aide-accused-lying-over-controversial-anti-romney-ad/>)

A top Obama campaign official is being accused of lying over what she knew about the man at the center of a damning super PAC ad tying his wife's death to Mitt Romney.

Deputy Campaign Manager Stephanie Cutter appeared on CNN Wednesday morning to say, among other things, that "I don't know the facts" about the case of Joe Soptic, a steelworker who appeared in a controversial ad for the pro-Obama super-PAC Priorities USA. In the ad, Soptic, recounts how his wife died of cancer after he lost his health insurance when his plant was shuttered after a takeover by Bain Capital and other companies working with the private equity firm.

Cutter said she didn't know when Soptic's wife fell ill, or about his health insurance.

Yet in May of this year, Cutter herself hosted a conference call in which Soptic detailed his case to reporters. During the call, as he did in the ad, Soptic explained how his wife fell ill after he lost his job, and how he lost his health insurance. The call took place as Soptic began appearing in Obama campaign ads, and was featured in a profile on the Obama campaign website.

The campaign profile listed Soptic as one of the "faces of Romney economics."

Cutter wasn't the only Obama campaign official caught up in the controversy.

"This is an ad by an entity that's not controlled by campaign. I certainly don't know the specifics of this man's case," campaign adviser Robert Gibbs said on MSNBC. Another Obama campaign spokeswoman separately told reporters that the campaign had no knowledge of the family involved.

Super PACs and the presidential campaigns are technically separate organizations, or are supposed to be. Both presidential campaigns have in the past cited that separation whenever challenged on super PAC ads. Obama campaign spokesman Ben LaBolt again stressed Wednesday, in response to the criticism, that "we can't coordinate with super PACs and didn't produce" the ad.

In an email to FoxNews.com, LaBolt also acknowledged the conference call but suggested that was beside the point. The email did not address the allegation that anybody had lied.

"Joe Soptic suffered when he lost his job in the aftermath of the GST Steel plant closing, and no one is denying that he discussed that when he appeared in a campaign advertisement and on a conference call. The important point here is that Mitt Romney's campaign is based solely on his experience as a corporate buyout specialist, and while he has been quick to claim he created jobs, he refuses to accept responsibility for the jobs that were lost and workers that were impacted," he said.

Romney's campaign, after decrying the ad on Tuesday, accused Obama's team Wednesday of flat-out "lying" about their familiarity with the case.

"President Obama and his campaign are willing to say and do anything to hide the President's disappointing record. But they're not entitled to repeatedly mislead voters," Romney campaign spokesman Ryan Williams said in a statement Wednesday afternoon.

Speaking to Fox News, Romney spokeswoman Andrea Saul also called the ad "disgusting" and "despicable." She said the ad "just shows the depth to which the Obama campaign and their allies will go to try to smear Mitt Romney."

[Gee! "Disgusting"? "Despicable"? The President's campaign must have hit pretty close to home, huh? -SteveB]

The ad did not reveal key details about the timeline of Soptic's case. First, Soptic's wife initially had her own health insurance after her husband lost his job. Second, Soptic's wife died in 2006, five years after her husband's company, GST, filed for bankruptcy. And long after Romney had left Bain Capital.

[None of this FOX "stuff" matters much. The point of the ad is that this is the kind of tragic thing that happens when a nation's government doesn't care if its people have the health care they need or not. That is a fact! That is the truth! It's just another losing point for Republicans this year. The old lies are wearing pretty thin. -SteveB]

[20120809-03](#)

15:35

SteveB

Re: "Obama Campaign Aide Accused of Lying Over Anti-Romney Ad, Ties to Steelworker" (reply to SteveM, above) & "The Scandal Behind Romney's New Attack Ad"

Here's something from a source consistent with yours.

"It's important to realize this is as dishonest an ad as you'll ever see -- in 2012 or in any other campaign cycle."

"The Scandal Behind Romney's New Attack Ad" by Passing by,

Aug. 7, 2012,

<http://beefarts.us.com/forum1/viewtopic.php?f=10&p=130575&sid=39e9e4481167c30e3b140f75af1f3985>)

Mitt Romney's presidential campaign has presented the political world with an important test. I'm eager to see whether we pass or fail.

First, a little background. Some Republican governors this year asked the Obama administration for some new flexibility on welfare standards -- the governors had some ideas about moving folks from welfare to work and needed the White House to sign off. Obama agreed -- existing work requirements would stay in place, but states, if they want to, can take advantage of new flexibility when it comes to experimenting with existing law.

This is the sort of shifting-power-to-the-states policy that Republicans are supposed to love. As of this morning, however, it's the basis for a new Mitt Romney attack ad.

It's important to realize this is as dishonest an ad as you'll ever see -- in 2012 or in any other campaign cycle.

For those who can't watch clips online, the ad shows President Clinton signing welfare reform into law in 1996, "requiring work for welfare." The spot then argues, however, that President Obama "quietly announced a plan to gut welfare reform by dropping work requirements." The voiceover tells viewers, "Under Obama's plan, you wouldn't have to work and wouldn't have to train for a job. They just send you your welfare check.... and welfare to work goes back to being plain old welfare."

We then learn, "Mitt Romney will restore the work requirement because it works."

Romney's lying. He's not spinning the truth to his advantage; he's not hiding in a gray area between fact and fiction; he's just lying. The law hasn't been "guttled"; the work requirement hasn't been "dropped." Stations that air this ad are disseminating an obvious, demonstrable lie.

All Obama did is agree to Republican governors' request for flexibility. That's it. Indeed, perhaps the most jaw-dropping aspect of this is that Romney himself, during his one gubernatorial term, asked for the same kind of flexibility on welfare law that Obama agreed to last month. **Romney, in other words, is attacking the President for doing what Romney asked the executive branch to do in 2005.**

The entire line of attack is simply insane.

How are we to respond to a campaign that deliberately deceives the public without shame? This lie about welfare policy comes on the heels of Romney's lie about voting rights in Ohio, which came on the heels of Romney's lies about the economy; which came on the heels of Romney's lies about health care; which came on the heels of Romney's lies about taxes.

The Republican nominee for president is working under the assumption that he can make transparently false claims, in writing and in campaign advertising, with impunity. **Romney is convinced that there are no consequences for breathtaking dishonesty.**

The test, then, comes down to a simple question: is he right?

The cynical response to an ad like this is that the lies are routine -- it's just something "everybody" in politics does. That's wrong. **An ad this dishonest is a genuine scandal** and it's time for political observers treat it as such. Reporters within earshot of the candidate shouldn't ask, "What about the gaffes?" They should ask, "Why are you lying about welfare policy?"

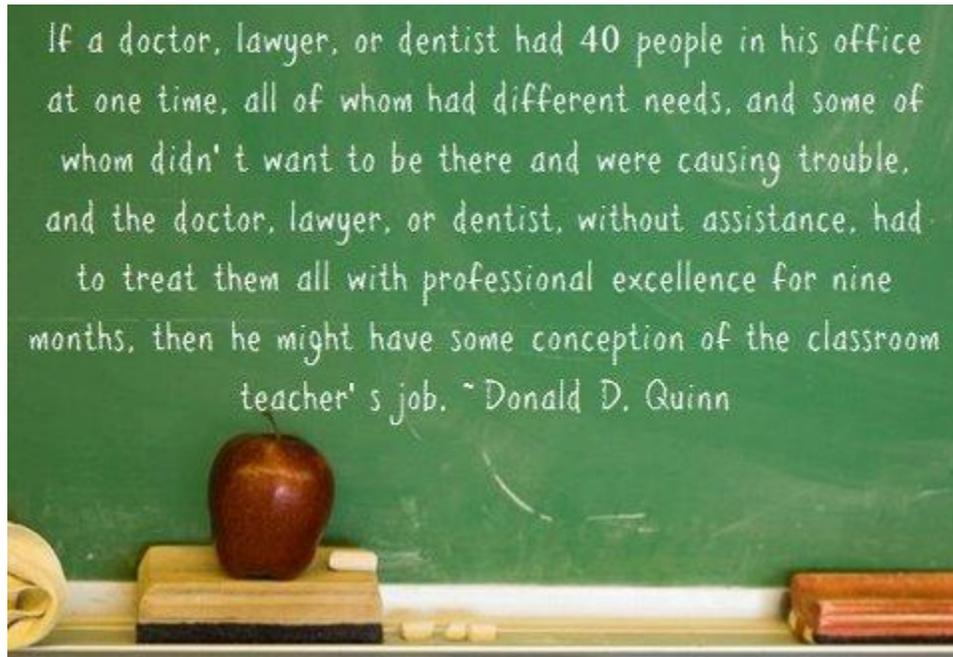
Also note the larger context: if Obama were as awful a president as Romney claims, the Republican attack machine wouldn't have to make stuff up -- the truth would be so brutal that voters would recoil and flock to the GOP candidate naturally. **What does it say about Romney's strength as a candidate that he has to make up garbage and hope voters don't know the difference?**

[20120809-04](#) 15:56 SteveM Re: "Obama Campaign Aide Accused of Lying..." etc. (reply to SteveB, above) & Video: "Dennis Prager Q & A at University of Denver"

Video: "Dennis Prager Q & A at University of Denver"

http://www.youtube.com/watch_popup?v=XNUc8nuo7HI

[20120809-05](#) 16:40 Jim Quote: Donald D. Quinn on a Teacher's Job



[20120809-08](#) 19:46 SteveB Re: Quote: Donald D. Quinn on a Teacher's Job (reply to Jim, above)

A very good one indeed. Thanks, Jim.

Praying for rain.

[20120809-06](#) 17:17 Art Re: What Love Can Do (reply to SteveB, FotM Newsletter #200)

Great doggie stories!!!! Really liked your 1999 poem. Rescued three Golden Retrievers today.

Talking to my Doctor during an appointment and we both wondered why some people treat dogs as throw aways while others of us just love them and treat them like family. Two different classes of humans and I can almost guarantee that same difference extends into other areas.

[But surely not politics? –SteveB]

Thanks. Newsletter made my day! [Thank you, Art!]

[20120809-07](#) 17:34 Art Re: "Preparing to Fail" (reply to all, FotM Newsletter #200)

Slow on this one but good stuff and this just the tip of the iceberg. The Osprey tilt wing another example of a system the military didn't want or need but got jammed down our throats. There are many more. All these so

called patriotic politicians are really just shilling for more government expenditures regardless of the need. Been going on for a very long time. Think the latest is the jerk from Oklahoma, Coburn, insisting we spend more for small arms. He probably has a stake in some gun company.

There are legitimate defense needs and, as someone who spent 30 years going into these little adventures other politicians got us into, I appreciated having good equipment, but the whole defense program is pretty much a joke and it is really just all about money and ripping off more and more from the taxpayer. Good soldiers, and there are still many, who try to insert reason, are quickly shuffled aside.

20120809-09	19:59	SteveB	"Obama Leads Romney by 7 Points as Negative Ads Take Toll"
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It might be Romney's lack of transparency and fat-cat attitude hurting him, rather than Mr. Obama's negative ads, more than matched in kind by the opposition. Maybe it's Romney's own LYING ads that are hurting him?

Maybe he should throw a Hail Mary and release his cheating tax forms? What's he got to lose at this point?

"Obama Leads Romney by 7 Points as Negative Ads Take Toll" by Sam Stein, Huffington Post

Aug. 9, 2012, (http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/08/09/obama-romney-poll_n_1761713.html)

President Barack Obama is leading Mitt Romney by 7 points among registered voters -- 52 percent to 45 percent -- in a just-released CNN/ORC International poll.

The margin echoes those of other polls released in recent days, and suggests that the barrage of tough advertisements against the presumptive Republican nominee has taken a toll. As CNN notes:

While Romney's favorable rating has remained steady (47% now compared to 48% in July), his unfavorable rating has jumped from 42% last month to 48% now ... Among independents, the poll indicates Romney's image has taken a beating. In May, only 40% of independents had an unfavorable view of Romney. Now, 52% of independents have a negative view of him.

These polls are, of course, just snapshots in time. But they underscore the problem that Romney's campaign now has on its hands. His image among the public has been largely defined by his opponent. And while Romney has plenty of cash to run ads of his own, time is running out for him to reverse this trend.

Take, for example, the following findings within the poll:

Sixty-four percent of all Americans, and 68% of independents, think Romney favors the rich over the middle class. And 63% of the public thinks Romney should release more tax returns than he has already made public, a figure which rises to 67% among independents.

UPDATE: 6:15 p.m. -- The recent trend of generally good news for the president continued on Thursday afternoon, with the release of a new poll by Fox News that showed Obama besting Romney by a 49 to 40 percent margin among registered voters. His lead has increased since last month's poll, when he enjoyed a 45 to 41 percent margin.

As with the CNN poll, the primary factor appears to be the barrage of negative ads directed Romney's way.

The Obama campaign has spent heavily on advertising attacking Romney's time at Bain Capital and his tax returns. And it appears to be working. Romney's favorable rating dropped six percentage points since last month and now sits at 46 percent, down from 52 percent in mid-July. At the same time his unfavorable rating went up five points. Romney's favorable rating has held steady among his party faithful, but it's down eight percentage points among independents and seven points among Democrats.

Perhaps the electorate is not so stupid as the GOP has assumed? Boy, that would be nice for a change!

"Shouldn't Mitt Romney Be Ahead by Now?" by Roger Simor, Politico

Aug. 9, 2012, (<http://dyn.politico.com/printstory.cfm?uuid=3A286244-59CB-43DF-BB69-D43653750DCD>)

Mitt Romney was speaking in a slow, measured cadence from a packed and steamy auditorium at Des Moines Central Campus High School on Wednesday. "We're worried about the drought," Romney said, "and are looking for more rain."

It is an open question whether presidential candidates have a special relationship with the Almighty, but at least Romney was in "gaffe-free" territory, it being unlikely that there were many pro-drought activists ready to pounce.

And Romney soon ended the "localizing" of his remarks and reverted to his stump speech.

"President Obama came in with a lot of promises," he said. "But it is now 42 straight months with unemployment above 8 percent."

The unemployment rate under Obama hit a high of 10 percent in October 2009 and has never done better than 8.1 percent during any full month of his presidency. (It was 7.6 percent in January 2009, but Obama didn't become president until the 20th of that month.)

And as has been pointed out many times, no president since FDR has been reelected with unemployment greater than 7.2 percent.

Further, more than 60 percent of Americans feel the nation is on the "wrong track" under Obama.

I could list other gloomy figures for Obama, but they all leave me with one question: So why is Obama still ahead in the polls? And not just in national polls, but also in key states that are needed for an Electoral College victory.

Shouldn't Romney be wiping the floor with Obama? By the measurements Romney uses again and again in his speeches — prolonged high unemployment, a failed economy and the unpopularity of "Obamacare" — shouldn't Americans be rallying around Romney by a significant majority by now?

After all, how long can Romney wait to catch fire? The election is only about three months away. True, Romney gets the opportunity to make a stirring convention speech — but so does Obama. True, Romney gets the opportunity to make an invigorating choice for his running mate, but Obama has already selected Joe Biden, who has shown himself to be a vigorous and popular campaigner.

True, the events that, in my opinion, actually could turn things around — the presidential debates — lie ahead in October. But there is little to suggest that Romney will be a dead-bang winner in those.

In the Republican primary debates Romney did win, he usually won by appearing more presidential than the others in the very weak and sometimes wacko Republican field. And now Romney will be standing on stage with a real president with almost four years of experience in that office, making it difficult for Romney to lay back and pull off the "more presidential" ploy.

Obama has had the advantage of taking national security — usually a Republican strong point — off the table with the killing of Osama bin Laden and America's weariness for more lengthy wars of occupation.

But Romney is running on prosperity and lunch-bucket issues, and just about every analyst I have read believes domestic issues will determine the outcome of the November election.

"A lot of people in the middle class are falling into poverty," Romney warns. And President Obama, Romney says, just doesn't know how to change that.

But what do the Great Gods of Politics, the opinion polls, show?

They show a country that still likes Obama more than it likes Romney. And by quite a bit.

As I have written for years, I have a simple — OK, simple-minded — way of determining who is going to win the presidency: The more likable candidate wins. Not always, but almost always.

On Aug. 2, a survey published by the well-respected Pew Research Center for the People & the Press found Obama was leading Romney by 51-41 percent for the presidency, the eighth time in a row since January that Obama has led Romney by between 4 and 12 percentage points.

But more importantly by my Simple Simon standard of likability, Romney's favorable/unfavorable rating was 37/52 compared with Obama's 50/45. Which means Romney had a net unfavorable rating of 15 points while Obama had a net favorable of 5 points.

On Wednesday, the *Washington Post* and ABC News released a poll showing 40 percent of voters approving of Romney and 49 percent disapproving. When it came to Obama, 53 percent of voters approved and 43 percent disapproved.

Which gave Romney a net disapproval of 9 points and Obama a net approval of 10 points.

Two different polls don't exactly establish a solid pattern, but the Romney people must be very, very worried.

Romney said in that Des Moines auditorium, "The American people are tired of being tired."

But if the recent polls are correct, the American people also may be tired of Mitt Romney.

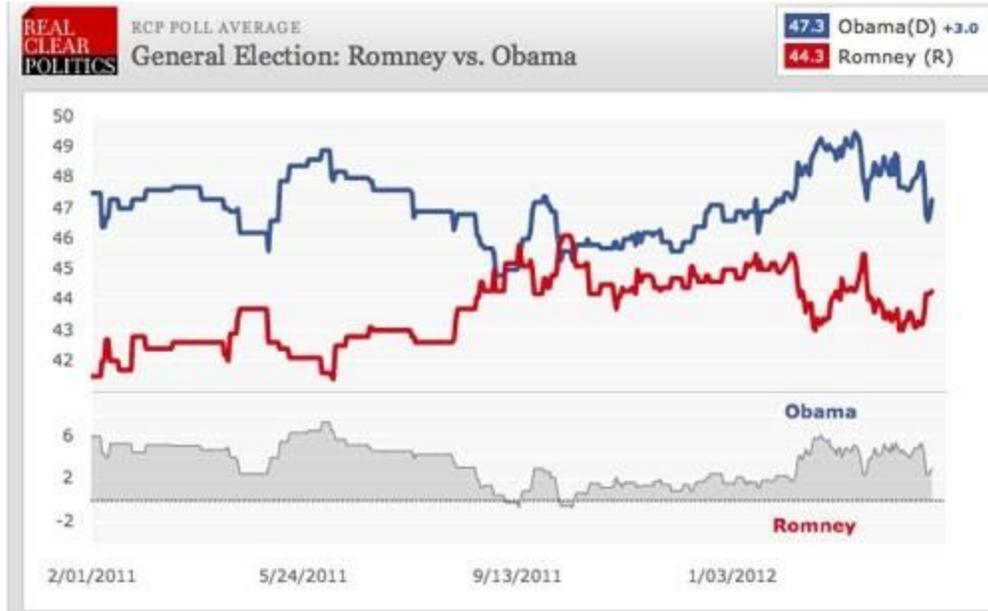
20120809-11	20:29	SteveM	Re: "Shouldn't Mitt Romney Be Ahead by Now?" (reply to SteveB, above)
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Romney has been ahead by 4 points for a week, unless you read the Huff Post. What does that Kool aid taste like?

20120809-12	21:33	SteveB	Re: "Shouldn't Mitt Romney Be Ahead by Now?" (reply to SteveM, above)
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Read the article (UPDATE). FOX says he's ahead by 9!

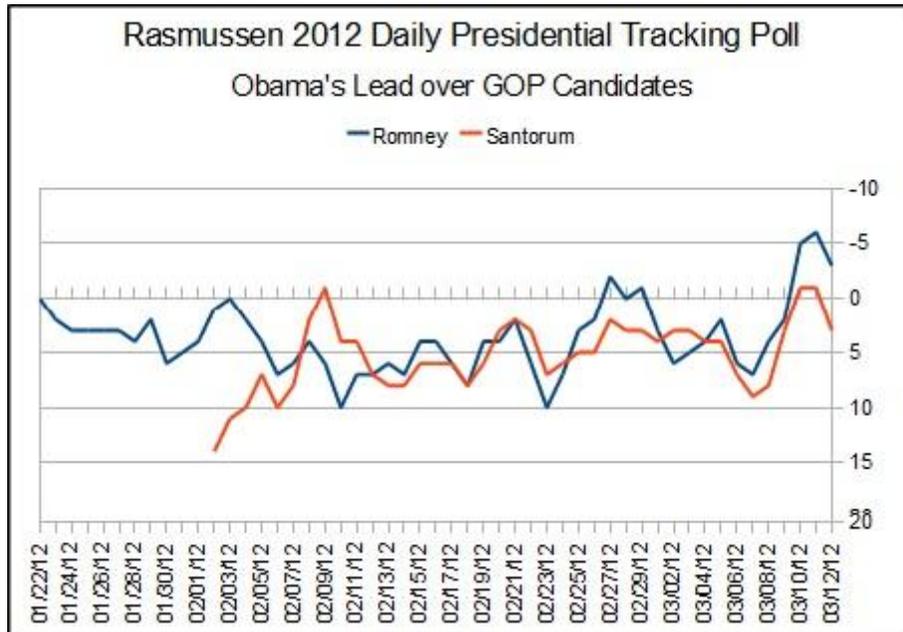
No polls I know, of any repute, have had Romney ahead by 4 this entire year. Here's the *Washington Post*:



What a loser your guy is, again! I can't believe you would like somebody that fake.

[20120809-13](#) 21:38 SteveB Re: "Shouldn't Mitt Romney Be Ahead by Now?" (reply to SteveM, above)

Maybe you're thinking (dreaming?) of Romney vs. Stinky Santorum (whom R0mney barely beat, and the gay-hating Catholic is definitely NOT presidential material):



DID IT EVER OCCUR TO YOU

THAT UNION WORKERS AREN'T OVERPAID...
MAYBE YOU'RE JUST UNDERPAID?

WHERE ARE THE GAINS GOING?

FROM 1970 TO 2010, IN INFLATION-ADJUSTED DOLLARS,
INCOME OF PRIVATE SECTOR WORKERS
FELL FROM \$32,000 TO \$29,000,
WHILE INCOME AMONG "JOB CREATORS"
ROSE FROM \$2-MILLION TO \$16-MILLION.

FIGURES ROUNDED

SOURCE: <http://nyti.ms/saez-and-piketty-on-inequality>

Occupy* Posters owsposters.tumblr.com 

So let me get this straight...

The plan was to move factories and manufacturing overseas, open strip malls on every corner, make it near impossible for our small businesses to compete, force most of us into the service industry, THEN cut our wages, give us little or no health insurance, take away regulations that protect us, and our right to bargain collectively?

Um, Yeah....NO!

www.facebook.com/serviceworkers

I thought maybe cats hadn't been getting their due in these pages lately...so...

http://theoatmeal.com/comics/cat_know

<http://facts.randomhistory.com/interesting-facts-about-cats.html>



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

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FRIENDS OF THE MIDDLE NEWSLETTER #202 — AUG. 13, 2012

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

INDEX: Click here.

R0mney's VP Pick: Paul Ryan

(posted by Steven W. Baker / SteveB, Aug. 13, 2012)

Boy, the Obama-Biden 2012 Campaign must be licking its chops!

Headlines: R0mney commits biggest "gaffe" of all! Misunderstands the American people completely!

What I love about R0mney's poor choice (for him) is that it's a good choice for the country. This election will provide a clear litmus test for Republican lies and hypocrisy and, should President Obama (and the rest of us) be so fortunate as to win, the death knell of the GOP as we know it.



I say what we do is, this fall, we take the country back permanently from these morally bankrupt A-holes!

Here's the *sentence of the century* (so far) from the article below ("How Grover Norquist Hypnotized the GOP"):

"It is now clear that the Republican strategy is to drive America to the brink of fiscal ruin and then argue that the only way out is to cut spending for the powerless."

"Paul Ryan? Seriously?" by John Nichols, *The Nation*/OpEdNews

Aug. 10, 2012, (<http://www.opednews.com/articles/Paul-Ryan-Seriously-by-John-Nichols-120810-852.html>)

Of course Paul Ryan wants to be Mitt Romney's vice presidential running mate.

The hyper-ambitious political careerist -- who has spent his entire adult life as a Congressional aide, think-tank hanger-on and House member -- is looking for a road up. And he is sly enough to recognize that, like Dick Cheney with George Bush, he could be more than just a vice president in the administration of so bumbling a character as Romney.

Ryan figured Romney out months ago.

The two men bonded during the Wisconsin presidential primary campaign in late March and early April. They got on so well that Ryan was playing April Fool's Day jokes on the Republican front-runner -- giving Romney a rousing introduction before the candidate came from behind a curtain to find the room where he had expected to be greeted by a crowd of supporters was empty.

Romney loves the prep-school fraternity that he has with Ryan, and every indication is that the former governor would be delighted to add the House Budget Committee chairman to his ticket.

The conversations have occurred. The vetting has been completed. It could happen. And, indeed, as the time for choosing nears, the Ryan buzz has been amplified -- mainly by the Wisconsin congressman's friends at *The Weekly Standard*, which has editorialized enthusiastically on behalf of his selection, and other conservative media outlets. But, now, even ABC's "Veep Beat" headlines "Paul Ryan's Rising Momentum."

There's just one problem.

Vice presidential nominees are supposed to help tickets, not hurt them.

Romney clearly needs help. Just back from a disastrous trip to Europe and the Middle East, mired in controversies about the "vulture capitalism" he practiced at Bain Capital and his refusal to release tax returns that his dad -- former Michigan governor and 1968 Republican presidential contender George Romney -- said contenders for the Oval Office had a responsibility to share with the voters, Romney could use a boost.

But Ryan would be a burden, not a booster, for a Romney-led ticket.

Like Romney, Ryan is a son of privilege who has little real-world experience or understanding. He presents well on Sunday morning talk shows and in the rarified confines of Washington think tanks and dinners with his constituents -- the Masters of the Universe on Wall Street -- but his record in Congress and the policies he now promotes are political albatrosses.

Some Republicans, perhaps even Romney, do not get this.

But the Obama campaign recognized, correctly, that Ryan's positioning of himself as the point man on behalf of an austerity that would remake America as a dramatically weaker and more dysfunctional country makes him the most vulnerable of prominent Republicans.

Ryan scares people who live outside the "bubble" of a modern conservative movement that thinks the wealthiest country in the world is "broke" and that Ayn Rand is an literary and economic seer.

The House Budget Committee chairman imagines himself as a high priest speaking unfortunate truths about debts and deficits, the unforgiving foe of social spending who would gladly sacrifice Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid on the altar of debt reduction. Ryan has branded himself well within Republican circles, so well that he has parlayed himself into contention for the vice presidential nod. To get that nomination, however, Ryan must count on the prospect that the party that takes as its symbol the memory-rich elephant will suddenly suffer a spell of forgetfulness. That's because **the Republican congressman from Wisconsin, for all his bluster, is anything but a consistent advocate for fiscal responsibility and balanced budgets. He is, in fact, a hypocrite.**

Or, to be more precise, a hypocritical big spender -- at least when Wall Street, the insurance industry and the military-industrial complex call.

Ryan has been a steady voter for unwise bailouts of big banks, unfunded mandates and unnecessary wars. Few members of Congress have run up such very big tabs while doing so little to figure out how to pay the piper. How has Ryan gotten away with his fool-most-of-the-people-most-of-the-time politics?

For the most part, he has until recently flown under the radar -- dazzling fellow Republicans with fiscal fancy footwork, while dancing around weak Democratic opposition in his home district.

But no more. This year, Ryan is being called out by an able challenger with actual experience in the private sector, as well as local government. Rob Zerban, the congressman's Democratic challenger, is not fooled by Ryan's budgetary blathering.

Zerban is familiar with Ryan's record. And he has been calling the budget committee chairman out on his "faux fiscal credentials."

"Congressman Paul Ryan can grandstand about the debt all he wants, but at the end of the day, Ryan is a root cause of many of the financial issues our country faces today," says Zerban. "From supporting two unfunded wars, to dumping millions of senior citizens into the Medicare Part D 'donut hole' while tying the hands of the government to negotiate prescription drug prices, and from fighting for subsidies for Big Oil that his family personally benefits from, to supporting the unfunded Bush tax cuts for his wealthiest campaign contributors, Paul Ryan's hypocrisy is astounding."

Even as national Republicans "vet" Ryan as a potential running mate for Mitt Romney, Zerban has been revealing the reality of a congressman who may talk the talk but who has never walked the walk. "Congressman Ryan fell down on the job, and is now trying to push the blame for his bad policy decisions onto President Obama," says Zerban. "Congressman Ryan had ten years in Congress -- almost all with a House Republican majority -- to reduce the deficit, prior to President Obama's election. He did nothing."

That's right.

If, by some chance, Paul Ryan were to become the Republican nominee for vice president, the whole country would be talking about his duplicity when it comes to the balancing of budgets.

Ryan's first vulnerability would be the legitimate concern about his willingness to rip apart the social safety net, under the guise of "reforms" that would undermine and eventually destroy Medicare, Medicaid and Social Security.

But under the serious scrutiny to which he would finally be subjected, Ryan would be revealed as something worse than a fiscal fabulist.

He would be revealed as a hypocrite of the highest order. Americans can handle hard truths and bold ideas. But they're not so good with hypocrisy.

And they wouldn't be so good with Paul Ryan.

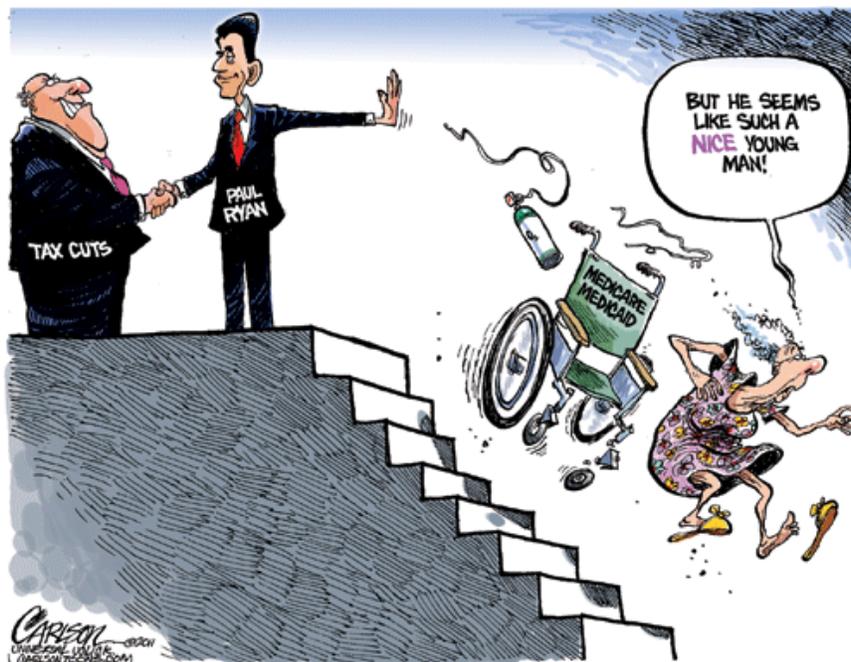
Amazing similarity!



Pam: Paul Ryan!!!!!! He is the devil. Absolute evil. If these b*stards win, we are doomed. If you wait for it, I'll tell you how I REALLY feel.

SteveB: It's funny you say he's the Devil, Pam. I was gazing at his photos this morning and my mind was full of a murky vision of some future flaming hell, lorded over by a man who turned out to be the reincarnation of some creature beyond Hitler's wildest dreams—Paul Ryan! Very seriously! Great minds... haha. Welcome back, my Pam! Now, how do you really feel? ;-)

SteveG: Neither one understands how it is to work for a living; neither understands the lives, concerns, worries, wants of the American people; politics is a game to them. I have noticed, since Reagan, Republicans having a common facial expression – a smirk. Rmoney and Ryan both have the redub smirk.



SteveB: Very weird, SteveG, I hadn't thought about it, but you are so right about that **smirk!** Is that something they indoctrinate them with, along with the talking points and bogus, contradictory philosophy? Notice, Mitt got kind of a botched indoctrination job. It comes across as robotic and, well... **botched!** Ryan was sent in to try to shore things up. Luckily, he got an almost perfect indoctrination job! THE WORLD IS SAVED!

SteveG: Back in the fifties I think my parents were Republicans, Eisenhower Republicans. After WWII, who could blame anyone. As President, he handled foreign policy and LBJ, through the Senate, handled domestic issues. Not certain what Nixon did. I didn't really start paying attention to politics until LBJ. Tim Russet really got me involved a few years ago. Interesting those smirks.

Tom: SteveB, you said: "Boy, the Obama-Biden 2012 Campaign must be licking its chops!" Don't worry Steve, the NWO Globalists control both BHO & Mittens Romney! "We The People" have NO Choice.

SteveB: Unfortunately, Tom, too often, that seems to be the case...



Clark: My favorite description of Paul Ryan is "zombie eyed granny starver," courtesy of Charles Pierce from esquire.com.

Bill: Anyway, whether or not he's the devil incarnate, he uses the same hair oil as Reagan, and that's not a good sign.

SteveG: Thank you, Bill.



SteveG: Damned scary!

20120810-01 04:56 Dick Fw: The Night Watchman

[Source of original email unknown. –SteveB]

Once upon a time the government had a vast scrap yard in the middle of a desert.

Congress said, "Someone may steal from it at night."

So they created a night watchman position and hired a person for the job.

Then Congress said, "How does the watchman do his job without instruction?"

So they created a planning department and hired two people, one person to write the instructions, and one person to do time studies.

Then Congress said, "How will we know the night watchman is doing the tasks correctly?"

So they created a Quality Control department and hired two people. One was to do the studies and one was to write the reports.

Then Congress said, "How are these people going to get paid?"

So they created two positions: a time keeper and a payroll officer then hired two people.

Then Congress said, "Who will be accountable for all of these people?"

So they created an administrative section and hired three people, an Administrative Officer, Assistant Administrative Officer, and a Legal Secretary.

Then Congress said, "We have had this command in operation for one year and we are \$918,000 over budget, we must cut back."

So they laid-off the night watchman.

NOW slowly, let it sink in.

Quietly, we go like sheep to slaughter. Does anybody remember the reason given for the establishment of the DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY during the Carter administration?

Anybody?

Anything?

No?

Didn't think so!

Bottom line is, we've spent several hundred billion dollars in support of an agency, the reason for which very few people who read this can remember!

Ready??

It was very simple... and at the time, everybody thought it very appropriate.

The Department of Energy was instituted on 8/04/1977, TO LESSEN OUR DEPENDENCE ON FOREIGN OIL.

Hey, pretty efficient, huh???

AND NOW IT'S 2012 -- 35 YEARS LATER -- AND THE BUDGET FOR THIS "NECESSARY" DEPARTMENT IS AT \$24.2 BILLION A YEAR. IT HAS 16,000 FEDERAL EMPLOYEES AND APPROXIMATELY 100,000 CONTRACT EMPLOYEES; AND LOOK AT THE JOB IT HAS DONE!

(THIS IS WHERE YOU SLAP YOUR FOREHEAD AND SAY, "WHAT WERE THEY THINKING?")

34 years ago 30% of our oil consumption was foreign imports. Today 70% of our oil consumption is foreign imports.

Ah, yes -- good old Federal bureaucracy.

NOW, WE HAVE TURNED OVER THE BANKING SYSTEM, HEALTH CARE, AND THE AUTO INDUSTRY TO THE SAME GOVERNMENT?

Hello!! Anybody Home?

Signed....The Night Watchman

[20120810-02](#) 05:14 SteveB Re: The Night Watchman (reply to Dick, above)

You know, not that it has anything to do with you, personally, but I think the kind of negativity in this email is one of the biggest problems facing America.

How can we, as a nation, keep believing in ourselves when we're constantly bombarded with this cr*p?

Don't believe the lies. The government is essential and performs many invaluable services. Sure it could do better, but not as long as the corruption persists—the corruption that at least one party fights tooth and nail to maintain. It is in the interest of those out of power to breed as much discontent with the government as possible. It's an evil, destructive tactic, but that's the level to which they've descended.

You know what I mean?

Take care and I hope you keep sending me your thoughts.

20120810-03 09:33 Dick Re: The Night Watchman (reply to SteveB, above)

Don't think for a minute that I believe everything I get via email. I know a lot of the truth gets twisted and misrepresented by both sides. It is all political posturing by "BOTH SIDES" and sadly to say, I have become very cynical viewing our government today because of the inherent corruption that lives in the beltway. They need to take the big PAC money out of Washington, but I know that will never happen because they are all drinking the kool aid down there.

I am an Independent voter and I did vote for Obama in the last election and probably will vote for him again, but if I was out of work, had lost my house, and had five mouths to feed, it would be a different story. What is the answer? We need to reform our tax system, either lowering the corporate taxes, close the loopholes, or go to a consumption tax. That will never happen because the country is run by lawyers and accountants...

20120810-04 12:29 SteveB Fw: MoveOn Action: Share R0mney's Creepy Story!

from MoveOn:

Mitt Romney has a creepy hand. We mean that literally--and we made an ad you're not gonna forget that shows his hand creeping into OUR pockets.

Because to pay for tax breaks for millionaires and billionaires, he's going to take it right from the middle class.

Incredibly, Mitt's tax plan would actually cost up to \$2,000 for middle class families while giving a \$87,000 tax cut to rich people like him.¹ Taking that money away would not only harm a lot of struggling families, it could drive us into another recession.²

Too many people think Republicans want to cut taxes for them, when all Romney wants to do is give more tax breaks to the rich. So we've got to get the word out about Mitt sticking his hand into middle-class pockets.

Share this ad with your friends and spread the word about Mitt's creepy hand:

<http://front.moveon.org/warning-mitt-romneys-a-pickpocket/>.

Thanks for all you do. --Justin, Steven, Ryan, Joan, and the rest of the team

P.S. MoveOn members are sharing their stories of what a \$2,000 Romney tax hike would take from them. Click here to add your photo message to our growing Tumblr:

<http://mytwothousanddollars.tumblr.com/>.

Sources:

¹"New Analysis Shows Romney Tax Plan Would Raise Taxes On Middle Class Families By More Than \$2,000," ThinkProgress, Aug. 1, 2012, <http://www.moveon.org/r?r=278200&id=&t=6&id=48486-20195165-wNbFqAx&t=10>.

"Study: Romney tax plan would result in cuts for rich, higher burden for others," *The Washington Post*, August 1, 2012, <http://www.moveon.org/r?r=278241&id=&t=7&id=48486-20195165-wNbFqAx&t=11>.

²"Romney's "Recovery Plan" Could Bring On Another Recession," *The New Yorker*, August 2, 2012, <http://www.moveon.org/r?r=278435&id=48486-20195165-wNbFqAx&t=13>.

"Mitt Romney and the Return of the Repressed" by Joan Walsh, Salon

Aug. 10, 2012, (http://www.salon.com/2012/08/10/return_of_the_repressed/)

(Not even the Mittness protection program to hide his past can keep Romney and team from sometimes telling the truth.)

At a certain point, you have to feel sorry for Mitt Romney. He's so determined to hide his Massachusetts moderate past, to deny his years as governor there, that he's gone into his own self-created Mittness protection program. Now he wears a brand-new identity, "severely conservative," as he tries to court the GOP's ultra-right Tea Party base.

Except every once in a while, though, Romney or the folks closest to him trip up. Something makes them tell, well, something like the truth. A month ago, after days of Romney hitting President Obama for the "massive tax increase" allegedly represented by Obamacare, Romney advisor Eric Fehrstrom famously defended the fine levied on those who refused to buy insurance as a penalty not a tax, because his boss had done the same thing in Massachusetts.

This week Andrea Saul has unleashed the hounds of hell trying to defend her boss from a pro-Obama super PAC ad, in which a steelworker laid off in a Bain Capital buyout alleges his wife died because she lost her health insurance thanks to Romney. Amazingly, Saul resorted to touting Romneycare, insisting "if people had been in Massachusetts, under Gov. Romney's health care plan, they would have had health care." The right immediately exploded with rage: How dare Saul invoke her boss's signature accomplishment as governor, which he's spent the entire campaign running away from? Have you no decency, madam?

RedState.com editor Erick Erickson headlined his post "The Moment All the Doubts About Romney Resurfaced on the Right." Rush Limbaugh called the remarks "a goldmine for Obama supporters." And Ann Coulter lost it completely with Sean Hannity, shrieking that Saul, whom she calls a "moron," should be fired:

Anyone who donates to Mitt Romney, and I mean the big donors, ought to say if Andrea Saul isn't fired and off the campaign tomorrow, they are not giving another dime, because it is not worth fighting for this man if this is the kind of spokesman he has...

There's no point in you doing your show, there's no point in going to the convention and pushing for this man if he's employing morons like this. This ad is the turning point and she has nearly snatched victory from the jaws of defeat! She should be off the campaign.

(Two tiny things: I think Coulter meant to say "snatched defeat from the jaws of victory," but she was upset. And it's nice to hear her announce that the whole point of Hannity's show is "pushing for this man" Romney.)

These Romney campaign "gaffes," for lack of a better word, make me think of Freud's concept of "the return of the repressed," in which the tension involved in suppressing an uncomfortable truth occasionally becomes just too much, and the truth rises up, either in what Freud called "neurotic symptoms" or on the campaign trail as "gaffes." You don't have to be a Freudian to believe that Team Romney's trouble avoiding their candidate's actual record reflects the Herculean – and perhaps impossible – effort such deception requires.

It's not just his record as Massachusetts governor that Romney is repressing. He doesn't like to talk about any of "the three Ms," as Joe Scarborough tweeted Thursday: Massachusetts, Mormonism or money.

When *Bloomberg Businessweek's* Josh Tyrangiel did a recent interview, he gently asked Romney about his religion, pointing to the many Mormons in politics, business and sports and wondering "what about Mormonism creates leaders?" But the candidate replied with "an elegant dodge," Tyrangiel told Scarborough on "Morning Joe" Thursday. The Republican no longer talks about his Bain Capital "job creating" years, either, given the controversy

over Bain's job destruction. And he's never liked discussing his vast wealth, first inherited from his father and then dramatically engorged by his own private equity success.

I think the energy required to suppress the truth on those three fronts is part of what forces Romney to behave like a robot and speak in bizarre faux-platitudes. Trying to avoid anything remotely controversial, he praises Michigan's trees for being "the right height." Lemonade becomes "Lemon. Wet. Good." A chocolate doughnut becomes "one of those chocolate, um, chocolate goodies." The exhausting effort to hide the advantages that come along with a lifetime of wealth results in head-scratching screw-ups like talking about Ann Romney's two Cadillacs or his NASCAR-team owning friends, offering to make a \$10,000 bet with Rick Perry, or making bizarre "jokes" about being unemployed when talking to unemployed voters. The repressed inevitably returns, and often at the worst moment.

But another way Romney copes with his inauthenticity is being absolutely brazen in his lying. Just this week, he bashed Obama for granting welfare-reform waivers he himself sought as governor. But since he doesn't even admit he was ever Massachusetts governor, safe within his Mittness protection program, he doesn't have to take any responsibility for what he did then. Now, even Rick Santorum and Newt Gingrich are acknowledging the Romney lie was a little bit too bald-faced, and that the presumptive GOP nominee went too far in claiming that the president relaxed work requirements. Gingrich admitted "we have no proof" the waivers did that, and said if anyone asked him his opinion about the ad's claims, he "would have said this makes it possible." Santorum likewise acknowledged Romney's falsehood, saying on a conference call that Obama could only "potentially gut" welfare reform at some point in the future.

Of course, that's less the return of the repressed than the return of the GOP primary rivalry. It's safe to say that after the truckload of manure Romney dropped on his GOP confreres, nobody likes this man. (His 2008 rivals hated him too.) Santorum actually chuckled Thursday when asked to comment on Saul's remarks. He chuckled! He's got to love the fact that his famous warning – "Mitt Romney is the worst Republican in the country to put up against Barack Obama" — has become a routine sound bite in this campaign.

But wait, there's more: Romney's welfare lie displayed another of his signature forms of brazen dishonesty: citing an "expert" who allegedly agrees with you, when said expert in fact disagrees with you. Former President Bill Clinton, whose welfare reform law Obama allegedly unraveled, released a statement rebuking the Romney ad and supporting Obama's moves. The very same day, the Washington Post's Ezra Klein found that every economist cited in a Romney economic policy paper disagreed with the way the campaign had used their research. Only last week, author Jared Diamond wrote a New York Times Op-Ed to refute Romney's claim that his book "Guns, Germs and Steel" provided a basis for Romney's racist claims about Palestinian "culture."

Then there are the Romney lies that don't even bother pretending to be based on expert opinion or fact. I never got over the very early campaign ad that featured a clip of Obama saying "if we keep talking about the economy, we're going to lose" — which was in fact a 2008 clip of Obama quoting an aide to John McCain. Just last week we enjoyed his bald-faced lie that the Justice Department's efforts to secure early voting for all Ohio voters was an "outrage" that would disenfranchise military voters. (Please note I'm not even listing Romney's claim that Obama told business owners, "You didn't build that," since you could at least argue Obama himself left the door open to misinterpretation by not adding the word "alone," though he means, everybody gets help from government infrastructure, education and military investment.)

I was tempted to go off on my standard rant about the media's failure to fact-check Romney's outrageous claims — except you know what? By and large reporters have been pretty good about debunking Romney's lies. Ohio papers immediately made clear there was no basis for Romney's military-voter lie. Journalists quickly discovered and reported that Romney himself asked for the welfare waivers he criticized Obama for granting. The hypocrisy in Andrea Saul's Romneycare remarks became immediate news.

And while it sometimes feels like Romney lies with impunity, maybe voters are picking up on his utter inauthenticity — about "the 3 Ms," and maybe more. In the latest *Washington Post*/ABC News poll, Romney's favorability ratings are at an all-time low, at 40 percent; 49 percent of all voters view him unfavorably, including 50 percent of independents. The Saul controversy reminded the party's right-wing base that they don't trust him, but neither do

most of the rest of the voters, apparently. Romney has turned his back on his past and revised his political beliefs so thoroughly he almost seems willing to sell his soul to be president. But what if nobody's buying it?

20120810-06	18:30	SteveB	"The Justice Department Seems Incapable of Making Cases Against Wall Street"
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"The Justice Department Seems Incapable of Making Cases Against Wall Street" by Eliot Spitzer, Slate

Aug. 10, 2012,

(http://www.slate.com/blogs/spitzer/2012/08/10/goldman_sachs_prosecution_fails_why_cant_the_justice_department_fight_wall_street.html)

How do we make sense of this? Goldman Sachs emails call their own investments "junk" and "crap," and Goldman Sachs salespeople refer to clients as "muppets" and "elephants." Yet the Justice Department says there is not enough evidence to bring a case on behalf of Goldman Sachs investors who lost vast sums of money.

First, a caveat: As a former prosecutor and New York attorney general, I feel constrained not to judge cases where I have not been able to review all the evidence. And in this nation we believe, as we should, that the weight of government prosecution—the enormous force of the government's investigative and prosecutorial powers—should be brought down on individuals or entities only when a very high burden of proof can be met.

Now that that's out of the way, I can say what we are all thinking: Really? Are you kidding me? Wall Street continues to get away scot-free? The Justice Department prosecutes Roger Clemens for perjury—spends countless resources, hours, and energy worrying about steroids in baseball—yet seems incapable of making cases against the big Wall Street firms that engineered the greatest lies, frauds, and scams in our economic history. I am as outraged, disappointed, and furious as you are. Have they no backbone, shame, or sense of what justice is all about? It does nothing for my already waning faith in this Justice Department.

So what do we do? First, let's go back to basics. Wall Street failed us because of greed run amok in a welter of conflicts of interest, a lack of dedication to integrity, failed regulatory systems, horrendous management, and a total absence of loyalty to fiduciary duties. We can and should demand of Congress that it enact bills already proposed by Sen. Sherrod Brown and Sen. Sheldon Whitehouse to break up the big banks.

If the Justice Department won't prosecute, we at least can let Wall Street know we don't trust them. The self-important titans of Wall Street fundamentally violated their side of the contract with the public. They were given the keys to the kingdom, in return for which we expected some serious leadership and thoughtfulness in their guiding of our economic system. They utterly failed us, and they still deserve our disdain and scorn.

20120811-01	06:38	SteveB	"If Mitt Romney Is Going to Lose, He's Going to Lose Ugly"
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"If Mitt Romney Is Going to Lose, He's Going to Lose Ugly" by @LOLGOP, *The National Memo*

July 19, 2012, (<http://www.nationalmemo.com/if-mitt-romney-is-going-to-lose-hes-going-to-lose-ugly/>)

Just imagine Mitt Romney's inner monologue on the day he signed RomneyCare. There's his old nemesis Ted Kennedy standing next to him, smiling that Kennedy smile. Finally the Heritage Foundation's conservative alternative to single payer health care will get a chance in the nation's most liberal state. This is how you become president, Ol' Mitty, he must have thought. Just play it down the middle.

We know Mitt is a malleable guy, to say the least. For years, he pretended to be sincerely pro-choice. Now he pretends to be severely anti-abortion rights. But he's always been, as Kennedy quipped, "multiple choice. What Mitt never expected back then was that a Democratic president would appropriate his signature achievement – and that it would then become the most hated thing in Fox Nation since Jimmy Carter.

So Mitt's campaign has devolved into a charade where he is trying to become the lovechild of Limbaugh and Reagan — even more conservative than the nation's foremost fundamentalist, Rick Santorum. He wanted to project strength, but somehow his contrail stank of weakness.

As former George W. Bush speechwriter David Frum explains:

For the past year, we have watched him be pushed around by the radical GOP fringe. He's been forced to abjure his most important achievement as governor, his healthcare plan. In December, he was compelled to sign onto the Ryan budget plan after months of squirming to avoid it. Last fall he released an elaborate economic plan. On the eve of the Michigan primary, he ripped it up and instead accepted a huge new tax cut — to a top rate of 28 per cent — that has never been costed (and that he now tries to avoid mentioning whenever he can). Romney has acknowledged in interviews that he understands that big rapid cuts in government spending could push the US economy back into recession. Yet he campaigns anyway on the Tea Party's false promise that it's the deficit that causes the depression, rather than (as he well knows) the other way around.

Mitt's business and financial record, shrouded in secrecy, has been turned into a battering ram by the Obama campaign. No longer does the press corps swallow the idea that Mitt and Bain Capital created jobs. Instead, more and more, Bain is associated with a malignant force in our economy: gamblers who play with other people's money, raking in big gains while socializing their losses.

Thus Mitt's true weakness is revealed: He can't get a grip his on his own narrative.

Mitt says he wants to drive the debate back to the economy. According to the conventional wisdom, if Mitt talks about the economy, he will win. What goes unsaid, however, is that 68 percent of Americans blame George W. Bush for the troubles we face today. You can't mention the economy without conjuring Bush's mess or asking, "What would Romney do differently?" As Bill Clinton says, Mitt is "Bush on steroids."

So the Romney team has now been busily trying to change the discussion from demanding apologies to Condoleezza Rice to favors for campaign donors to "Fast and Furious" to inventing things the President supposedly said about the economy.

None of that is working, which provoked Romney surrogate John Sununu into calling the President "un-American" and snarking about the president's admitted use of drugs as a student. When the immediate backlash hit, Sununu went on TV with an "apology" nearly as vile as his original insults.

Now Mitt's campaign is spouting crazed right-wing conspiracy and invective that only make sense to people who would much rather vote for Sarah Palin. Mitt has forgotten what he learned in Massachusetts: Elections tend to be won in the middle.

Suburban moms in Philadelphia and Cincinnati will choose our next president. They may find the secrecy of a big businessman willing to pander to the far right by taking extreme stands on women's health rather upsetting. Images of the extreme right battering a president over invented conspiracies will, I predict, work against Mitt among independents, as his campaign literally threatens to descend deeper and deeper into Breitbartism, which is like Clinton Derangement Syndrome on steroids.

Because all the far right does — and all they want to do — is to make the middle, where elections are won, uninhabitable for politicians

[20120811-02](#)

07:40

SteveB

Video: "Florida Ex-GOP Chair: Voter Suppression Strategies Go Beyond Voter ID Laws"

Video (Aug. 10, 2012): http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iYEp-i4BnKk&feature=player_embedded.

Al Sharpton's PoliticsNation featured shocking public confirmations regarding the Florida Republican Party and its new voter ID laws push. Former GOP party Chairman Jim Greer (in sworn testimony) confirmed that party strategists met on voter registration strategies with the full intent to suppress Blacks, Latinos, and other minorities from voting in Florida come Nov. Former Florida GOP Chairman Greer said -- live on air:

There's no doubt that what the Republican led legislature in Florida and Governor Scott are trying to do is make sure the Republican party has an advantage in this upcoming election by reducing early voting and putting roadblocks up for potential voters, Latinos, African Americans to register and then to exercise their right to vote. There's no doubt. I was in the room. It's part of the strategy.

20120811-04	12:41	SteveB	"America's Deficit Attention Disorder"
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Great name for it: "DEFICIT ATTENTION DISORDER"!

"America's Deficit Attention Disorder" by David Korten, *Yes!* Magazine/NationofChange

<http://www.nationofchange.org/america-s-deficit-attention-disorder-1344691501>

The political debate in the United States and Europe has focused attention on public financial deficits and how best to resolve them. Tragically, the debate largely ignores the deficits that most endanger our future.

In the United States, as Republican deficit hawks tell the story, "America is broke. We must cut government spending on social programs we cannot afford. And we must lower taxes on Wall Street job creators so they can invest to get the economy growing, create new jobs, increase total tax revenues, and eliminate the deficit."

Democrats respond, "Yes, we're pretty broke, but the answer is to raise taxes on Wall Street looters to pay for government spending that primes the economic pump by putting people to work building critical infrastructure and performing essential public services. This puts money in people's pockets to spend on private sector goods and services and is our best hope to grow the economy."

Democrats have the better side of the argument, but both sides have it wrong on two key points.

- First, both focus on growing GDP, ignoring the reality that under the regime of Wall Street rule, the benefits of GDP growth over the past several decades have gone almost exclusively to the 1 percent—with dire consequences for democracy and the health of the social and natural capital on which true prosperity depends.
- Second, both focus on financial deficits, which can be resolved with relative ease if we are truly serious about it; and ignore far more dangerous and difficult-to-resolve social and environmental deficits. I call it a case of deficit attention disorder.

To achieve the ideal of a world that secures health and prosperity for all people for generations to come, we must reframe the public debate about the choices we face as a nation and as a species. We must measure economic performance against the outcomes we really want, give life priority over money, and recognize that money is a means, not an end.

What We Borrow from Each Other

To realistically address the nature of the public financial deficits at the center of the current political debate, it is crucial to understand the nature of money and debt. Money is just a number, a system of accounting useful in facilitating economic exchange. A deficit occurs when expenditures exceed income. If, as a result, financial liabilities come to exceed financial assets, we go into debt. It is all basic accounting.

The key point, which the deficit debates rarely address, is that one person or entity's financial debt is another person or entity's financial asset. We can only borrow money from each other. The idea that we borrow money from the future is an illusion.

From a societal perspective, total debts and assets are always in balance. Consequently, if we say that one person or entity has excessive financial debt, we in effect say that another has excessive financial assets. Reducing the aggregate financial debt of debtors necessarily requires reducing the aggregate financial assets of the creditors.

In theory, we could instantly wipe away all financial debts through a universal forgiveness, a modern equivalent of the ancient institution of the Jubilee. The ancients recognized the significance of such action to restore the balance essential to the healthy function of the human community.

The deficit-hawks recoil in horror and assure us that we can reduce government debt while leaving the financial assets of the rich untouched. It makes perfect sense in the fantasy world of pure finance in which profits and the financial assets of the rich grow perpetually even as growing inequality and wasteful material consumption deplete the social capital of community and the natural capital of Earth's biosphere.

A viable human future, however, must be based on living world realities rather than financial world fantasies.

What We Steal from Future Generations

Any normally intelligent 12-year-old is fully capable of understanding the distinction between a living forest or fishery and a system of financial accounts that exists only as electronic traces on a computer hard drive. Unfortunately, this simple distinction seems to be beyond the comprehension of the economists, pundits, and politicians who frame the public debate on economic policy. By referring to financial assets as "capital" and treating them as if they had some intrinsic worth beyond their value as a token of exchange, they sustain the deception that Wall Street is creating wealth rather than manipulating the financial system to accumulate accounting claims against wealth it had no part in creating.

Real capital assets have productive value in their own right and cannot be created with a computer key stroke. The most essential forms of real capital are social capital (the bonds of trust and caring essential to healthy community function) and biosystem capital (the living systems essential to Earth's capacity to support life). We are depleting both with reckless abandon.

- Social capital is the foundation of our human capacity to innovate, produce, engage in cooperative problem solving, manage Earth's available natural wealth to meet the needs of all, and live together in peace and shared prosperity. Social capital is depleted as individualistic greed becomes the prevailing moral standard and the governing institutions of society deprive all but a privileged minority of access to a secure and dignified means of living. Once it is depleted, social capital can take generations to restore.
- Biosystem capital provides a continuing supply of breathable air, drinkable water, soils to grow our food, forests to produce our timber, oceans teeming with fish, grassland that feed our livestock, sun, wind, and geothermal to provide our energy, climate stability, and much else essential to human survival, health, and happiness. It is depleted when soils are degraded, oceans are overfished, rivers and lakes are polluted, forests cut down, aquifers contaminated and depleted, and climate stabilization systems disrupted. These natural systems can take thousands, even millions of years to restore. Species extinction is forever.

According to the World Wildlife Federation's *2012 Living Planet Report*, at the current rate of consumption, "it is taking 1.5 years for the Earth to fully regenerate the renewable resources that people are using in a single year. Instead of living off the interest, we are eating into our natural capital." This is a path to never-never land. Unlike with financial deficits, simple debt forgiveness is not an option.

When we deplete Earth's bio-capacity—its capacity to support life in its many varied forms—we are not borrowing from the future; we are stealing from the future. Even though it is the most serious of all human-caused deficits, it rarely receives mention in current political debates.

When we assess economic performance by growth in GDP and stock price indices, we in effect manage the economy to make the most money for people who have the most money. This leads us to the fanciful belief that as a society we are getting richer. In fact, we are impoverishing both current and future generations by creating an unconscionable concentration of economic power, depriving billions of people of a secure and dignified means of living, and destroying the social and biosystem capital on which our real well-being depends.

With proper care and respect, biosystem capital can provide essential services in perpetuity. The reckless devastation of productive lands and waters for a quick profit, a few temporary jobs, and a one-time energy fix from Earth's non-renewable fossil energy resources represent truly stupid and morally reprehensible deficit spending. Evident current examples include tar sand oil extraction, deep sea oil drilling, hydraulic fracturing to extract natural gas, and mountaintop removal coal mining. The fact that we thereby deepen human dependence on finite nonrenewable fossil energy reserves and accelerate climate disruption make such actions all the more stupid and immoral.

Financial system logic, which rests on the illusion that money is wealth, tells us we are making intelligent choices. Living systems logic tells us our current choices are insane and a crime against future human generations and creation itself.

From Built-to-Loot to Built-to-Serve

The economy of a just and sustainable society needs a proper system of money creation and allocation that:

1. Supports the health and productive function of social and biosystem capital and allocates the sustainable generative output of both to optimize the long-term health and well-being of all; and
2. Rewards individuals with financial credits in proportion to their actual productive contribution to living system health and prosperity.

The current U.S. money system does exactly the opposite. It celebrates and rewards the destruction of living capital to grow the financial assets of Wall Street looters at the expense of Main Street producers—thus concentrating economic and political power in the hands of those most likely to abuse it for a purely individualist short-term gain.

Wall Street operates as a criminal syndicate devoted to the theft of that to which it has no rightful claim. It then bribes politicians to shield the looters from taxes on their ill-gotten gains and to eliminate social programs that cushion the blow to those they have deprived of a secure and meaningful means of livelihood. This brings us back to the real source and consequence of excess financial debt.

Masters and Debt Slaves

In the big picture, the Wall Street 1 percent has divided society into a looter class that controls access to money and a producer class forced into perpetual debt slavery—an ancient institution that for millennia has allowed the few to rule the many [See inset: "Wall Street and the Ultimate Tyranny"]. The immense burden imposed on the 99 percent by public debt, consumer debt, mortgage debt, and student debt is an outcome of a Wall Street assault on justice and democracy.

The resulting desperation and loss of social trust account for the many current symptoms of social disintegration and decline in ethical standards. These include growth in family breakdown, suicide, forced migration, physical violence, crime, drug use, and prison populations.

Equality as a Crucial Variable

I grew up in America during a time when we took pride in being a middle-class society without extremes of wealth and poverty. In part, we were living an illusion. Large concentrations of private wealth were intact and systemic discrimination excluded large segments of the population—particularly people of color—from participation in the general prosperity. The underlying concept that the good society is an equitable society, however, was and still is valid. And from the 1950s to the 1970s the middle class expanded.

Complete equality is neither possible nor desirable. Modest inequality creates essential incentives for productive contribution to the well-being of the community. Extreme inequality, as exemplified by current U.S. society, is both a source and an indicator of serious institutional failure and social pathology.

British epidemiologist Richard Wilkinson has compiled an impressive body of research that demonstrates beyond any reasonable doubt that economic and social inequality is detrimental to human physical and mental health and happiness—even for the very rich. Relatively equal societies are healthier on virtually every indicator of individual and social health and well-being.

In highly unequal societies, the very rich are prone to seek affirmation of their personal worth through extravagant displays of excess. They easily lose sight of the true sources of human happiness, sacrifice authentic relationships, and deny their responsibility to the larger society—at the expense of their essential humanity. At the other extreme, the desperate are prone to manipulation by political demagogues who offer simplistic analyses and self-serving solutions that in the end further deepen their misery. Governing institutions lose legitimacy. Democracy becomes a charade. Moral standards decline. Civic responsibility gives way to extreme individualism and disregard for the rights and well-being of others.

To achieve true prosperity, we must create economies grounded in a living systems logic that recognizes three fundamental truths:

- The economy's only valid purpose is to serve life.
- Equality is foundational to healthy human communities and a healthy human relationship to Earth's biosphere.
- Money is a means, not an end.

A New Political Narrative and Agenda

Runaway public deficits are but one symptom of a profound system failure. They can easily be resolved by taxing the unearned spoils of the Wall Street looters, eliminating corporate subsidies and tax havens, and cutting military expenditures on pointless wars that undermine our security.

Joblessness can easily be eliminated by putting the unemployed and underemployed to work meeting a vast range of unmet human needs from rebuilding and greening our physical infrastructure to providing essential human services, eliminating dependence on fossil fuels, and converting to systems of local organic food production. If the primary constraint is money, the Federal Reserve can be directed to create it and channel it to priority projects through a national infrastructure bank—a move that avoids enriching the bankers and does not create more debt.

In addition, we must:

1. Break up concentrations of unaccountable power.
2. Shift the economic priority from making money to serving life by replacing financial indicators with living wealth indicators as the basis for evaluating economic performance.
3. Eliminate extremes of wealth and poverty to create a true middle-class society.
4. Build a culture of mutual trust and caring.
5. Create a system of economic incentives that reward those who do productive work and penalize predatory financial speculation.
6. Restructure the global economy into a planetary system of networked bioregional economies that share information and technology and organize to live within their respective environmental means.

Within a political debate defined by the logic of living systems, such measures are simple common sense. Within a political debate defined by conventional financial logic, however, they are easily dismissed as dangerous and illogical threats to progress and prosperity.

So long as money frames the debate, money is the winner and life is the loser. To score a political victory for life, the debate must be reframed around a narrative based on an understanding of the true sources of human well-being and happiness and a shift from money to life as the defining value.

A promising new frame is emerging from controversies surrounding the recent United Nation's Rio+20 environmental conference. Wall Street interests argued that the best way to save Earth's biosystems is to put a price on them and sell them to wealthy global investors to manage for a private return. Rather than concede the underlying frame to Wall Street and debate the price and terms of the sale, indigenous leaders and environmental groups drew on the ancient wisdom of indigenous peoples to challenge the underlying frame. They declared that as the source of life, Earth's living systems are sacred and beyond price. They issued a global call to recognize the rights of nature.

Thus framed, the Rio+20 debate highlights **a foundational and inherent conflict between the rights of nature, human rights, property rights, and corporate rights.**

In current practice, based on the same financial logic that leads us to treat financial deficits as more important than social and environmental deficits, we give corporate rights precedence over the property rights of individuals. We give property rights precedence over the human rights of those without property. And we give human rights precedence over the rights of nature.

We will continue to pay a terrible price for so long as we allow the deeply flawed logic of pure finance to define our values and frame the political debate.

There is no magic bullet quick fix. We must reframe the debate by bringing life values and living systems logic to the fore and turning the prevailing rights hierarchy on its head. The rights of nature must come first, because without nature, humans do not exist. As living beings, our rights are derivative of and ultimately subordinate to the rights of Earth's living systems.

Human rights come, in turn, before property rights, because property rights are a human creation. They have no existence without humans and no purpose other than to serve the human and natural interest. Corporations are a form of property and any rights we may choose to grant to them are derivative of individual property rights and therefore properly subordinate to them.

The step to a prosperous human future requires that we acknowledge life, not money, as our defining value, accept our responsibilities to and for one another and nature, and bring to the fore of the debate the social and bio-system deficits that are the true threat to the human future.

Replacing cultures and institutions that value money more than life with cultures and institutions that value life more than money is a daunting challenge. Fortunately, it is also an invigorating and hopeful challenge because it reconnects us with our true nature as living beings and offers a win-win alternative to the no-win status quo.

20120811-05	12:41	SteveG & SteveB	"The Tim McCarver Show — George Will" (Subject: Baseball, Mainly)
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SteveG: This is better if you can find the video, but still worth a read.

"The Tim McCarver Show — George Will" Aug. 2, 2009,
(http://www.livedash.com/transcript/the_tim_mccarver_show%28george_will%29/408/KRON/Sunday_August_2_2009/73831/)

SteveB: If you love baseball ya gotta love this interview. The Greencastle we grew up in was like Champagne, IL – half Cubs fans and half Cardinals fans and, usually, neither too happy. (You know, George Will and Michael Moore are both FotM Newsletter subscribers, though I've never heard from either of them otherwise.)

SteveG: Scattered around here and there was a Reds fan and most of the Sox fans didn't admit it. Do know some people that had access to a rail pass and would take the train to St. Louis, watch a game, and return home in the same day. Back in the days of the gas house gang in St. Louis, they stopped in Greencastle and played an exhibition game against DPU – of course that was way before our time. Oertles 92 was the big sponsor of the Reds game – never drank that.

SteveB: I remember seeing Stan Musial in St. Louis, though my Dad was a Cubs and White Sox fan...or whoever was an underdog or playing against the Yankees. But I loved the Yankees and he could never understand that! I'd forgotten about those Cincy fans. You're right, "scattered about...". I never drank that beer either and always thought Schlitz sucked. I believe both are now long dead.

SteveG: Wait till next year...gotta be a Cubbies fan. They always seemed to have 1 really outstanding player and that was it. The Bears used to have a dominant linebacker, a good running back, and a good tight end and that was it. Miss the Midwest and its closeness. Indianapolis Indians – great and cheap seats; three hours to Cincy, St. Louis, or Chicago.

SteveB: ROCKY CALAVITO!

SteveG: He was a Clevelander. How about Ryne Sandberg?

SteveB: Cubbies! Calavito was with Indy for a while. Sandberg: in Indy any or just for the Cubs? Good player.

SteveG: Didn't know Sandberg was in Indy. Did you know that Wayne Gretzky played professional hockey in Indy for the Ice? Since we started, for some reason, talking about baseball, I would love to be able to go back in time and watch the Negro League players – can you imagine – Satchel and the rest.

SteveB: I was asking if you were saying Sandberg ever played in Indy. I guess not...at least that I know of...but then I'm not exactly a font of baseball knowledge... I meant Rocky played there in Indy a little... Didn't know about Gretzky.

I'm not sure about watching the Negro league...they would have spent so much time celebrating and dancing...just kidding. It's amazing that people were treated so unfairly and it was invisible to most others...

SteveG: I think I will go back and watch Ken Burns' documentary on baseball. How is the cookie store?

SteveB: Cookies: We're stuck for a while waiting for the gas line in the street to be tapped. Working on packaging and oven exhaust in the meantime. Hoping to have gas by the end of this next week. Then we can really go to town. We keep inventing new cookies. The latest: coca-lemon! (Partly BillB's idea...the coca part!) Have a great weekend, Steve.

20120811-06	13:02	SteveB	Fw: Daily Kos Action: Donate \$5 to Our 'Upgrade the Senate' Project!
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Yes, Romney just announced his VP pick. And yes, it's never over until it's over, and we have to fight all the way through Election Day. But the fact is, we are winning.

Mitt Romney is a disaster for Republicans, the first GOP nominee in modern history to have higher negatives than positives. His every interaction with regular Americans (and heads of state, for that matter) has ended in an insult. He was a bully when he was younger, and he's a bully now. Even conservatives don't like him.

The numbers are starting to show this. Two different national polls released this week show President Obama ahead by 7 points. A third national poll—from Fox News!—puts Obama up by 9 points. Add up all the national polls, and Obama leads by almost six points. Further, swing state polls show him with 332 electoral votes compared to only 206 for Mitt Romney.

Republicans thought that the *Citizens United* decision and their rich billionaires would give them a leg up, but after \$100 million already spent attacking Obama, the president is still kicking Romney's butt. We are poised to hold firm in the Senate and even the House is coming into play where, worse case scenario, we significantly chop that Republican majority down.

The best way to protect our lead is by going on the attack. When Peyton Manning is winning a football game, he goes on the attack, runs up the score, demoralizes his opposition. The GOP did that to us in 2010. Now it's our turn.

Pile on by donating \$5 to our Upgrade the Senate project. We're working to elect five great Democrats who will make the U.S. Senate a much better place: Elizabeth Warren in Massachusetts, Chris Murphy in Connecticut, Tammy Baldwin in Wisconsin, Martin Heinrich in New Mexico, and Mazie Hirono in Hawaii. Even a \$5 contribution, or \$1 to each of these five excellent candidates, will go a long way toward making sure Republicans continue to spiral downward.

We're winning, and while we do the work needed to seal the deal, we've got to own it. Please contribute \$5 to our Upgrade the Senate project, or \$1 for each of our five top-notch Senate candidates:

https://secure.actblue.com/contribute/page/upgradethesenate?refcode=08_11_em5.

Keep fighting, Markos Moulitsas, Publisher, Daily Kos

20120811-07	14:08	Tom	Fw: Warning on Deceptive Bible Translations
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from Dion Jackson (via Facebook, <https://www.facebook.com/dion.jackson.96/posts/395645690500890>)

For those of you who don't believe that scripture has not been watered down by way of the thousands of different versions. Take a look at these two scriptures and see if you can tell the difference

For surely it is not angels he helps, but Abraham's descendants. —Hebrews Chapter 2:16 (New International Version)

For verily he took not on him the nature of angels; but he took on him the seed of Abraham. (King James Version)

Now.....tell me which one is more deceiving, let's see if you're spiritual eyes are open...

20120811-09	14:24	SteveB	Re: Warning on Deceptive Bible Translations (reply to Tom, above)
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Good point. The Bible is still being written, daily, as we speak...by a committee...in fact, by multiple committees. They will probably never finish.

Here's something about what you mentioned the other day, Obamainfo (transcripts):

Video: http://live.wsj.com/video/opinion-obama-transcript/2D0D6C19-8A1C-4193-90B8-09E9314EEF2C.html?mod=wsj_article_tboleft#!2D0D6C19-8A1C-4193-90B8-09E9314EEF2C

20120811-08	14:10	SteveG	"Dragging America into Court: Law of the Sea & Global Litigation"
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Interesting article on climate change...

"Dragging America into Court: Law of the Sea and Global Litigation" by Doug Bandow, *Forbes*

Mar. 19, 2012, (<http://www.forbes.com/sites/dougbandow/2012/03/19/dragging-america-into-court-law-of-the-sea-and-global-litigation/2/>)

They might not be practicing the world's oldest profession, but lawyers have been always with us. In America political losers increasingly go to court, hoping to convince judges to trump the democratic process. The result has been a rise in dubious judge-made "rights" which infringe on the basic liberties of the rest of us.

The same trend threatens on the world scene. The latest vehicle for potential litigation is the Law of the Sea Treaty (LOST), which the U.N.'s Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea explained "is not...a static instrument, but rather a dynamic and evolving body of law that must be vigorously safeguarded and its implementation aggressively advanced."

Three decades ago President Ronald Reagan rejected LOST, an omnibus agreement which would have redistributed wealth from Western industrialized democracies to Third World dictatorships. The so-called G-77, or developing state lobby, hoped to create a new International Seabed Authority (ISA) to control seabed resources and mult private mining operations.

Then the larger push for a "New International Economic Order" collapsed as the Soviet Union and its allied "socialist bloc" headed toward history's trashbin. Even Third World governments came to admit that President Reagan had been right about LOST.

Washington should have pushed to sever the seabed regulations from more broadly supported treaty provisions governing navigation and other issues. However, treaties attract State Department diplomats like flames attract moths. The Bush and Clinton administrations decided to "fix" the seabed provisions by renegotiating LOST. The resulting compromise eliminated some of the convention's most obnoxious rules but preserved the overall Rube Goldberg structure of organizations, committees, commissions, chambers, and more unchanged.

Worse, the revised text left regulatory landmines buried throughout. For instance, one of LOST's biggest failings was the mandatory transfer of proprietary technology to Third World states as well as the Enterprise, which was to mine the seabed for the Third World-controlled ISA. The LOST "fix" only deleted one of two sections governing technology transfer.

Left intact was the requirement that the Authority "promote and encourage the transfer to developing States of such technology and scientific knowledge." The Authority and member governments also were directed to "initiate and promote" programs "for the transfer of technology to the Enterprise and to developing states," including "facilitating the access of the Enterprise and of developing States to the relevant technology."

The revised text even added a new requirement: "If the Enterprise or developing States are unable to obtain deep seabed mining technology, the Authority may request all or any of the contractors and their respective sponsoring State or States to cooperate with it in facilitating the acquisition of deep seabed mining technology." The Authority could use this language to recreate the mandatory technology transfer requirement.

Other regulatory ghosts haunt the revised text. The original treaty perversely limited mineral production; ambiguous language in the new version could yield the same outcome, despite claims that the accord now is market-friendly. Such controversies could end up in international court.

Although LOST focuses on the high seas, it includes language covering domestic pollution. The provisions are surprisingly expansive, or "stunning in their breadth and depth," as Steven Groves of the Heritage Foundation observed in a new study. A decade ago Ireland relied on LOST to sue Great Britain over the commissioning of a mixed oxide plant because of the latter's alleged impact on the Irish Sea. The plant had been approved not only by

Britain, but also the European Union (EU). Ireland dropped the suit, but only because the EU sued Ireland for not filing its case in the European Court of Justice.

Many environmentalists believe that LOST could be used against the U.S. in the same way. A few years ago an environmental activist mistakenly sent me an email after our debate on the treaty. He acknowledged that it might be difficult to convince Americans that the treaty would not similarly bind America when the World Wildlife Federation and Citizens for Global Solutions were promoting LOST by claiming that the convention would stop Russia from polluting the Arctic. He worried that this inconsistency suggested that the treaty was in fact "some kind of green Trojan Horse."

It is. Groves noted that "Some environmental activist groups have already demonstrated a propensity for supporting, participating in, and in some cases actually filing climate change lawsuits against U.S. targets, as well as taking other legal actions relating to the marine environment in U.S. courts and international forums."

LOST also incorporates the so-called "no harm" rule, which obligates countries to regulate activities in order to avoid negatively impacting neighboring states. The duty makes sense as a guiding principle in designing domestic regulations and undertaking specific international obligations. But, warned Groves, approving LOST would transform "a sensible principle to regulate conduct between two neighboring countries into a seemingly unconstrained doctrine to impute global liability for alleged acts of atmospheric pollution." Unaccountable international legal forums then would enforce the rule.

Worse, the debate over climate change has opened up grand new litigation vistas. And treaty enthusiasts are anxious to take advantage. William C.G. Burns of the Monterey Institute of International Studies exulted that LOST "may prove to be one of the primary battlegrounds for climate change issues in the future."

He pointed to the Treaty's expansive definition of marine pollution: "the potential impacts of rising sea surface temperatures, rising sea levels, and changes in ocean pH as a consequence of rising levels of carbon dioxide in sea water" all could "give rise to actions under the Convention's marine pollution provisions." Even if the litigation did not succeed, he suggested that "the specter of litigation may help to deepen the commitment of States" to legislate on the issue.

Two decades ago environmental lawyers Durwood Zaelke and James Cameron wrote about the possibility of low-lying islands suing industrialized states over rising sea levels. Unfortunately, the prospect of international lawsuits is more than the gleam of an academic's eye.

The Pacific island state of Palau announced last September that it would seek a ruling from the International Court of Justice barring nations from allowing emissions from their territory to cause climate change affecting other countries. Palau indicated that it would rely on LOST as well as the Kyoto Protocol. A decade ago Fiji, Kiribati, Nauru, and Tuvalu, also Pacific islands, threatened to sue under LOST, though as yet have not filed. Groves suggested that mountainous nations could similarly sue over shrinking glaciers. One could imagine other states claiming damages based on drought, desertification, or other alleged consequences of global warming.

The issue of climate change is extraordinarily complex. The best evidence is that the planet is warming, but the role of human activity and impact on the environment are far less certain and remain highly controverted. Nor is it possible to demonstrate causation between any particular emission and any particular consequence. There may be good political reasons to mitigate the distress of island countries, but such matters belong in international negotiations, not international courts.

However, as Groves warned, acceding to the treaty "would expose the U.S. to lawsuits on virtually any maritime activity, such as alleged pollution of the marine environment from a land-based source or even through the atmosphere. Regardless of the case's merits, the U.S. would be forced to defend itself against every such lawsuit at great expense."

Litigation could occur in several venues: the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea, the International Court of Justice, an arbitral tribunal, and a "special" arbitral tribunal. There would be no appeals and all suffer from political

elements which would interfere with the delivery of genuine "justice." Indeed, noted Groves, the U.S. "has suffered adverse judgments in high-profile international lawsuits in the past."

LOST would reinforce the litigation danger by creating obligations directly enforceable by U.S. courts. Annex III, Article 21(2) of the treaty states that tribunal decisions "shall be enforceable in the territory of each State Party." In a 2008 case Supreme Court Justice John Paul Stevens contrasted another treaty with LOST, which, he wrote, did "incorporate international judgments into international law." As a result, U.S. judges would become international enforcers.

There is a role for international litigation, but not for resolving important and complicated policy issues. Domestic politics and international diplomacy are messy and imperfect, but remain the proper forums. Ultimately environmental issues are too important to debate without involving those who would do the paying.

Treaty advocates recognize that the American people aren't likely to favor buying a pig in a poke. So treaty negotiator Bernard Oxman suggested silence. Back in 1996 he admitted that the text "is amply endowed with indeterminate principles, mind-numbing cross-references, institutional redundancies, exasperating opacity and inelegant drafting." Thus, he recommended "restraint in speculating on the meaning of the convention." After all, he added, "it is essential to measure what we say in terms of its effect on the goal. Experienced international lawyers know where many of the sensitive nerve endings of governments are. Where possible, they should try to avoid irritating them."

What should irritate Americans even more, however, is the knowledge that LOST proponents are attempting to hide their ambitions.

LOST is a complicated issue, far more so than proponents publicly acknowledge. Perhaps the treaty's most dangerous aspect is creating a "dynamic and evolving body of law." America already is paying the price for far too much and too expansive litigation domestically. The U.S. Senate should say no to LOST.

[20120811-10](#)

15:08

SteveB

Fw: MoveOn Action: Chip in \$5 to Help America Learn the Truth About Paul Ryan!

from MoveOn:

Breaking news: Mitt Romney just picked tea party hero Paul Ryan as his running mate. And Romney may have just committed political suicide.

Paul Ryan is the author of the most extreme right-wing budget ever proposed in Congress. He wants to dismantle Medicare, privatize Social Security, and cut taxes for millionaires while raising taxes on the middle class.¹ Simply put, the policies Paul Ryan stands for are politically toxic.

But here's the thing: Paul Ryan isn't just a extremist—he's young, smart, and charming. The media constantly describe him as looking like "the boy next door." He's the ultimate wolf in sheep's clothing.

The next ten days are crucial to make sure the American people understand the truth about Paul Ryan. We're launching an emergency "Paul Ryan Is Wrong for America" campaign, but we need to raise \$200,000 to make it happen.

Here's the plan:

- We'll hold protests everywhere Romney and Ryan go this week, and we've got an ambitious plan to hand out over 1 million pink slips to voters to show how many jobs the Romney-Ryan ticket would cost us.
- We're going to share stories from Paul Ryan's actual constituents who know best what he's all about—including one woman who was unemployed, facing large medical bills, and literally camped out for a week in front of Paul Ryan's office because he refused to meet with her. She's still waiting for her meeting.

- We're putting together a wave of super-sharable videos, photos, and Facebook posts that we can use to tell people about Paul Ryan via social media. For starters there's an unbelievable clip of Glenn Beck calling Paul Ryan his "soul mate."²

I'm so excited to put this plan into action. If we can pull it off, this could hurt the Romney campaign the way the Sarah Palin debacle hurt John McCain. But we can't do it unless we can raise \$200,000 this weekend.

Chip in \$5 to help make sure America knows the truth about Paul Ryan:

https://pol.moveon.org/donate/romney_ryan.html.

The next ten days are crucial for the future of America. Every day this week, Mitt Romney will be making appearances with Paul Ryan at diners, town squares, factories—all to create the false impression that he and Paul Ryan understand the concerns of people like you and me.

The Republicans are trying to do exactly what they did with George W. Bush—convince people that he's someone you'd like to have a beer with, and then ram through a far-right agenda that screws the middle class. We can't count on the media to tell the truth. It's up to us to set the record straight.

Thanks for all you do. –Justin, Tate, Laura, Julia, and the rest of the team

Sources:

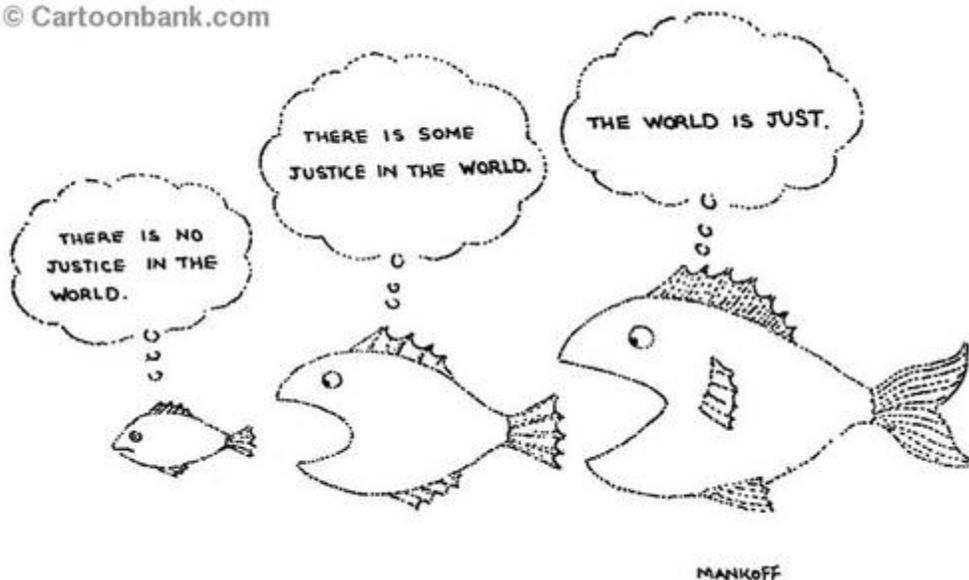
¹"12 Things You Should Know About Vice Presidential Candidate Paul Ryan," Think Progress, August 11, 2012, <http://www.moveon.org/r?r=278662&id=48569-20195165-hCEdgKx&t=5>.

²"Glenn's Soulmate?" GlennBeck.com, April 12, 2010, <http://www.glennbeck.com/content/articles/article/196/39068/>.

20120811-11	15:21	SteveB	Cartoon: 'The World Is Just...'
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I think this says a lot about why some have different opinions:

© Cartoonbank.com



Good one.

"How Grover Norquist Hypnotized the GOP" by Deval Patrick, *The Washington Post*

June 30, 2011, (http://www.washingtonpost.com/how-grover-norquist-hypnotized-the-gop/2011/06/30/AGYOUlsH_story.html)

At our 25th college reunion in 2003, Grover Norquist — the brain and able spokesman for the radical right — and I, along with other classmates who had been in public or political life, participated in a lively panel discussion about politics. During his presentation, Norquist explained why he believed that there would be a permanent Republican majority in America.

One person interrupted, as I recall, and said, "C'mon, Grover, surely one day a Democrat will win the White House."

Norquist immediately replied: **"We will make it so that a Democrat cannot govern as a Democrat."**

In a way, Republicans have accomplished that. This spring, in an effort to reduce the deficit, a Democratic president proposed to cut \$2 trillion in spending, much of it from domestic programs Democrats have long championed. Last week, Republican leaders withdrew from talks with the vice president on a bipartisan plan to reduce the deficit because, as another part of the solution and like every bipartisan budget deal for decades, the president proposed to raise revenue. Specifically, he proposed to raise \$1 in new revenue (through closing loopholes or ending the Bush tax cuts for the wealthiest Americans) for every \$2 in spending cuts. In response to that modest proposal, Republican leaders walked out.

It is now clear that the Republican strategy is to drive America to the brink of fiscal ruin and then argue that the only way out is to cut spending for the powerless. Taxes — a dirty word thanks to Norquist's "no new taxes" gimmick — are made to seem beyond the pale, even as the burden of paying for our society shifts disproportionately to the middle class and working poor. It is the height of fiscal folly. It is also not who we are as a country.

For nearly a decade, our federal government paid for two wars and a costly prescription drug benefit with borrowed money. Our government paid for the Bush tax cuts with borrowed money. Now, after exhausting the budget surplus left by the Clinton administration, the only spending Republicans are willing to discuss cutting is spending that helps the poor and vulnerable — meaning anything that does not touch the interests of large corporations and the very rich. Last December, Republican hard-liners held hostage benefits for people out of work in exchange for an agreement to extend the Bush tax cuts for those who make a million dollars or more a year. Last month, many of the same lawmakers rallied to protect special tax benefits for oil companies that have made record profits on high gas prices.

Meanwhile, some mom-and-pop stores and college students pay more in taxes than some of our largest corporations. Still, taxes are sin to the hard-liners, though they have difficulty demonstrating a correlation over the past decade between tax cuts and economic growth.

Everyone knows that we have to reduce the deficit. Everyone also knows that reducing government spending and addressing revenue shortfalls have to be a part of the plan. This isn't partisan; it's pragmatic. Some might even call it conservative. But Norquist and the rest of the radical right have so hypnotized the Republican leadership that they can't come out and say it. For them, maintaining their rhetoric about spending cuts is more important than preserving the civic investments that make America stand out from the rest of the world.

That political calculus has consequences for the rest of us.

If the deficit is reduced by spending cuts alone and there is no deal to raise the debt ceiling, here's a sampling of what happens: We stop paying our soldiers or supporting our veterans. We stop feeding the neediest children and families. We stop providing nursing-home care to seniors. We stop inoculating schoolchildren. We stop helping young people go to college. The unemployed are on their own. Roads and bridges continue to crumble. And we jeopardize the creditworthiness of our economy at one of the most fragile moments in history. All to protect the marginal benefits of the most fortunate and the political purity of the radical right.

I remember sitting in the Dunster House dining hall at Harvard with Norquist when we were sophomores or juniors in college, while he explained his view of government, or lack thereof. It sounded logical — the notion that we could live independently of each other, making our own decisions in our own self-interest. But then who puts out the fires? Who answers the calls to 911? Who educates poor children? Who helps people with disabilities?

I'd like to think that the most prosperous nation in human history can have both freedom and security. I think we have reached a point where my personal success is not threatened by a program to help our parents retire with dignity. Voters are smart enough to see that taxes are one of the ways we get those things. They are the price we pay for civilization.

(The writer, a Democrat, is governor of Massachusetts.)

20120811-14	18:42	SteveG	Republicans Will Destroy the USA to keep It GOP
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Registered to vote yesterday.

Not certain voting will be enough given the way the voting laws are being changed all over the place. How can Ohio have different voting hours in different precincts? Federal elections should be uniform rather than each state being able to set their own rules to meet their individual state party in power agendas! Oh yeah, there I go stepping all over state rights.

20120811-17	18:52	Art	Re: Republicans Will Destroy the USA to keep It GOP (reply to SteveG, above)
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This a pretty good summary when you look back at the past few years.

"We will make it so that a Democrat cannot govern as a Democrat."

That's pretty much been the theme.

20120811-15	18:50	SteveG	"12 Things You Should Know About Vice Presidential Candidate Paul Ryan"
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"12 Things You Should Know About Vice Presidential Candidate Paul Ryan" by Igor Volsky, ThinkProgress

Aug. 11, 2012, (<http://thinkprogress.org/politics/2012/08/11/677171/12-things-you-should-know-about-vice-presidential-candidate-paul-ryan/?mobile=nc>)

Mitt Romney has picked as his running mate 42 year-old Republican Congressman Paul Ryan (R-WI), the architect of the GOP budget, which the *New York Times* has described as "the most extreme budget plan passed by a house of Congress in modern times."

Below are 12 things you should know about Ryan and his policies:

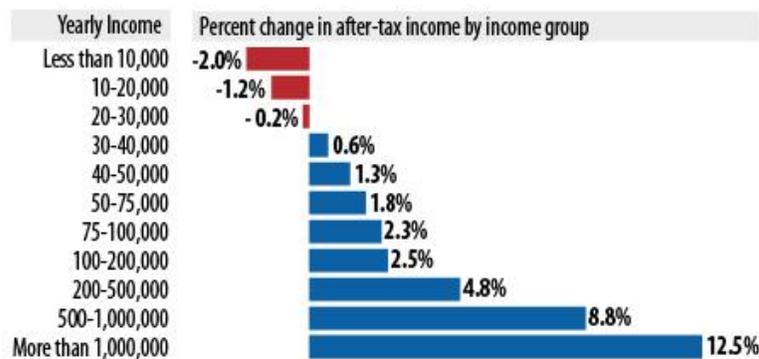
1. Ryan embraces the extreme philosophy of Ayn Rand.

Ryan heaped praise on Ayn Rand, a 20th-century libertarian novelist best known for her philosophy that centered on the idea that selfishness is "virtue." Rand described altruism as "evil," condemned Christianity for advocating compassion for the poor, viewed the feminist movement as "phony," and called Arabs "almost totally primitive savages. Though he publicly rejected "her philosophy" in 2012, Ryan had professed himself a strong devotee. "The reason I got involved in public service, by and large, if I had to credit one thinker, one person, it would be Ayn Rand," he said at a D.C. gathering honoring the author of *Atlas Shrugged* and *The Fountainhead*. "I give out *Atlas Shrugged* as Christmas presents, and I make all my interns read it. Well... I try to make my interns read it."

2. Ryan wants to raises taxes on the middle class, cut them for millionaires.

Paul Ryan’s infamous budget — which Romney embraced — replaces “the current tax structure with two brackets — 25 percent and 10 percent — and cut the top rate from 35 percent.” Federal tax collections would fall “by about \$4.5 trillion over the next decade” as a result and to avoid increasing the national debt, the budget proposes massive cuts in social programs and “special-interest loopholes and tax shelters that litter the code.” But 62 percent of the savings would come from programs that benefit the lower- and middle-classes, who would also experience a tax increase. That’s because while Ryan “would extend the Bush tax cuts, which are due to expire at the end of this year, he would not extend President Obama’s tax cuts for those with the lowest incomes, which will expire at the same time.” Households “earning more than \$1 million a year, meanwhile, could see a net tax cut of about \$300,000 annually.” Audiences have booed Ryan for the unfair distribution.

Ryan Plan Would Cut Taxes Deeply at the Top, Raise Them at the Bottom



Note: Compared to current policy; does not include plan's reductions in unspecified tax expenditures.
Source: Urban Brookings Tax Policy Center, Table T12-0126

Center on Budget and Policy Priorities | cbpp.org

3. Ryan wants to end Medicare, replace it with a voucher system.

Ryan’s latest budget transforms the existing version of Medicare, in which government provides seniors with a guaranteed benefit, into a “premium support” system. All future retirees would receive a government contribution to purchase insurance from an exchange of private plans or traditional fee-for-service Medicare. But since the premium support voucher does not keep up with increasing health care costs, the Congressional Budget Offices estimates that new beneficiaries could pay up to \$1,200 more by 2030 and more than \$5,900 more by 2050. A recent study also found that had the plan been implemented in 2009, 24 million beneficiaries enrolled in the program would have paid higher premiums to maintain their choice of plan and doctors. Ryan would also raise Medicare’s age of eligibility to 67.

4. Ryan thinks Social Security is a “ponzi scheme.”

In September of 2011, Ryan agreed with Rick Perry’s characterization of Social Security as a “Ponzi scheme” and since 2005 has advocated for privatizing the retirement benefit and investing it in stocks and bonds. Conservatives claim that this would “outperform the current formula based on wages earned and overall wage appreciation,” but the economic crisis of 2008 should serve as a wake-up call for policymakers who seek to hinge Americans’ retirement on the stock market. In fact, “a person with a private Social Security

account similar to what President George W. Bush proposed in 2005" would have lost much of their retirement savings.

5. Ryan's budget would result in 4.1 million lost jobs in 2 years.

Ryan's budget calls for massive reductions in government spending. He has proposed cutting discretionary programs by about \$120 billion over the next two years and mandatory programs by \$284 billion, which, the Economic Policy Institute estimates, would suck demand out of the economy and "reduce employment by 1.3 million jobs in fiscal 2013 and 2.8 million jobs in fiscal 2014, relative to current budget policies."

6. Ryan wants to eliminate Pell Grants for more than 1 million students.

Ryan's budget claims both that rising financial aid is driving college tuition costs upward, and that Pell Grants, which help cover tuition costs for low-income Americans, don't go to the "truly needy." So he cuts the Pell Grant program by \$200 billion, which could "ultimately knock more than one million students off" the program over the next 10 years.

7. Ryan supports \$40 billion in subsidies for big oil.

In 2011, Ryan joined all House Republicans and 13 Democrats in his vote to keep Big Oil tax loopholes as part of the FY 2011 spending bill. His budget would retain a decade's worth of oil tax breaks worth \$40 billion, while cutting "billions of dollars from investments to develop alternative fuels and clean energy technologies that would serve as substitutes for oil." For instance, it "calls for a \$3 billion cut in energy programs in FY 2013 alone" and would spend only \$150 million over five years — or 20 percent of what was invested in 2012 — on energy programs.

8. Ryan has ownership stakes in companies that benefit from oil subsidies.

Ryan "and his wife, Janna, own stakes in four family companies that lease land in Texas and Oklahoma to the very energy companies that benefit from the tax subsidies in Ryan's budget plan," the Daily Beast reported in June of 2011. "Ryan's father-in-law, Daniel Little, who runs the companies, told Newsweek and The Daily Beast that the family companies are currently leasing the land for mining and drilling to energy giants such as Chesapeake Energy, Devon, and XTO Energy, a recently acquired subsidiary of ExxonMobil."

9. Ryan claimed Romneycare has led to "rationing and benefit cuts."

"I'm not a fan of [Romney's health care reform] system," Ryan told C-SPAN in 2010. He argued that government is rationing care in the state and claimed that people are "seeing the system bursting by the seams, they're seeing premium increases, rationing and benefit cuts." He called the system "a fatal conceit" and "unsustainable."

10. Ryan believes that Romneycare is "not that dissimilar to Obamacare."

Though Romney has gone to great lengths to distinguish his Massachusetts health care law from Obamacare, Ryan doesn't see the difference. "It's not that dissimilar to Obamacare, and you probably know I'm not a big fan of Obamacare," Ryan said at a breakfast meeting sponsored by the American Spectator in March of 2011. "I just don't think the mandates work ... all the regulation they've put on it...I think it's beginning to death spiral. They're beginning to have to look at rationing decisions."

11. Ryan accused generals of lying about their support for Obama's military budget.

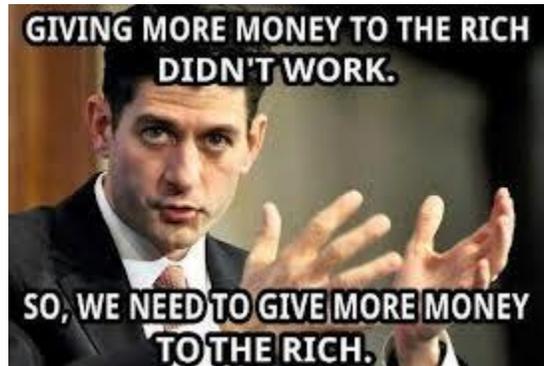
In March, Ryan couldn't believe that Joint Chiefs of Staff chairman Gen. Martin Dempsey supports Obama's Pentagon budget, which incorporates \$487 billion in cuts over 10 years. "We don't think the generals are giving us their true advice," Ryan said at a policy summit hosted by the *National Journal*. "We don't think the generals believe that their budget is really the right budget." He later apologized for the implication.

12. Ryan co-sponsored a "personhood" amendment, an extreme anti-abortion measure.

Ryan joined 62 other Republicans in co-sponsoring the Sanctity of Human Life Act, which declares that a fertilized egg "shall have all the legal and constitutional attributes and privileges of personhood." This would outlaw abortion, some forms of contraception and invitro fertilization.

20120811-16 18:51 SteveG "Glenn's Soulmate?" (Interview with Paul Ryan)

Get scared, get really scared, get pi*sed, get pi*sed off!



"Glenn's Soulmate?" (<http://www.glennbeck.com/content/articles/article/196/39068/>)

GLENN BECK: One name that I hear an awful lot about and, you know, it's strange. I'm getting a lot of heat now from this article that was in *Forbes* magazine called Beck, Inc. It was on the cover. I think it's ought on newsstands today, the cover. And it starts with the opening line of, I could give a flying crap about politics. I care about principles. I don't care about the process at all. And there's a follow-up story in *Forbes* now on that because so many people misunderstood it. Or they are using it to smear me. I don't follow the people day to day in Washington, but when I hear names over and over again, I look into them. Paul Ryan is a name I keep hearing of just, you know, he's a god among conservatives. So I asked Stu, I don't know, about a week ago. I said, Stu, can you look into Paul Ryan, found out what you can about him. He found a speech that I read to you or portions of that he gave in Oklahoma, and it appeared to me that he was standing up for progressivism which doesn't really sit well with me. We heard from Paul Ryan's office as soon as the show was over and they said, no, you've got that all wrong. If I get it wrong, I don't care what political party it's in; I will correct the record. Heritage.org has corrected the record today and the guy who wrote the article is a guy who I know hates progressives because he's one of our researchers on the progressive movement. And the best guy to do it is Paul Ryan. So he joins us now. Hello, congressman, how are you, sir?

PAUL RYAN: Hey, nice to meet you.

GLENN: Nice to meet you, sir. Tell me, tell me your thoughts on progressivism.

PAUL RYAN: Right. What I have been trying to do, and if you read the entire Oklahoma speech or read my speech to Hillsdale College that they put in there on Primus Magazine, you can get them on my Facebook page, what I've been trying to do is indict the entire vision of progressivism because I see progressivism as the source, the intellectual source for the big government problems that are plaguing us today and so to me it's really important to flush progressives out into the field of open debate.

GLENN: I love you.

PAUL RYAN: So people can actually see what this ideology means and where it's going to lead us and how it attacks the American idea.

GLENN: Okay. Hang on just a second. I -- did you see my speech at CPAC?

PAUL RYAN: I've read it. I didn't see it. I've read it, a transcript of it.

GLENN: And I think we're saying the same thing. I call it --

PAUL RYAN: We are saying the same thing.

GLENN: It's a cancer.

PAUL RYAN: Exactly. Look, I come from -- I'm calling you from Janesville, Wisconsin where I'm born and raised.

GLENN: Holy cow.

PAUL RYAN: Where we raise our family, 35 miles from Madison. I grew up hearing about this stuff. This stuff came from these German intellectuals to Madison-University of Wisconsin and sort of out there from the beginning of the last century. So this is something we are familiar with where I come from. It never sat right with me. And as I grew up, I learned more about the founders and reading the Austrians and others that this is really a cancer because it basically takes the notion that our rights come from God and nature and turns it on its head and says, no, no, no, no, no, they come from government, and we here in government are here to give you your rights and therefore ration, redistribute and regulate your rights. It's a complete affront of the whole idea of this country and that is to me what we as conservatives, or classical liberals if you want to get technical.

GLENN: Thank you.

PAUL RYAN: -- ought to be doing to flush this out. So what I was simply trying to do in that speech was simply saying those first versions, those first progressives, they tried to use populism and popular ideas as a means to getting -- detaching people from the Constitution and founding principles to pave the way for the centralized bureaucratic welfare state.

GLENN: Okay. So you and I have -- wait, wait, hang on just a second. You and I agree because -- the way it was worded.

PAUL RYAN: Yeah.

GLENN: It sounded like you thought that Woodrow Wilson and Teddy Roosevelt and their progressivism was good and that's --

PAUL RYAN: Yeah. There was one blog which I think you cited that completely misinterpreted my remarks.

GLENN: Thank you.

PAUL RYAN: All the other blogs that wrote about my speech I think got it accurately. What I probably should have done was added a couple more sentences. I cut the thing back for time.

GLENN: No, no, that's fine.

PAUL RYAN: I should have just added a couple more sentences. What I was basically saying is the progressives we have now who are the people we have run our government, they don't even try to do that. They don't even try to pretend to be advancing a popular agenda. They try to cram through their agenda as fast as they can while they have the power that they have in order to get this stuff in place. So that is basically what I was saying is the kinds of progressives we have today, you know, aren't even pretending to do what people want for the country.

GLENN: Paul, how is it that you and I have never met?

PAUL RYAN: You know, I don't -- it's a really good question. You don't go to Washington much, do you?

GLENN: No, I avoid it like the plague.

PAUL RYAN: I go to Washington and Wisconsin every week and I don't really go anywhere in between, except for Oklahoma where my in-laws live.

GLENN: Do you watch or ever listen to the show? Are you familiar with what I've been saying?

PAUL RYAN: I'm familiar with it but you are on at a time of day that I just can't get to a television. You are on too early. So I just haven't had a chance to watch. I've watched you on O'Reilly and you've been replayed on Greta. So obviously I'm familiar with you.

GLENN: I'm just --

PAUL RYAN: And I know you've been going after progressivism which is exactly what I've been trying to do as well.

GLENN: I mean, I'm just surprised that, I mean because it sounds like you're on exactly the same --

PAUL RYAN: Yes.

GLENN: -- road that I'm on, and I have been feeling, and I imagine you are, too, feeling wildly alone on this because most people don't even understand progressivism.

PAUL RYAN: Right.

GLENN: So many dopes out in America are just like, yeah, well, I'm for progress.

PAUL RYAN: That's right.

GLENN: Jeez, it's not about progress. It's not even about the Constitution. I just gave a talk this weekend where we were talking about, you know, we're fundamental -- the president of the United States is saying we're going to fundamentally transform the country.

PAUL RYAN: Right.

GLENN: Into what? We're going to make progress to where?

PAUL RYAN: Right.

GLENN: What are we progressing to?

PAUL RYAN: If you read the entire Oklahoma speech, that's exactly what I'm talking about. That's what I'm saying, here's what this means --

GLENN: My fault, my fault.

PAUL RYAN: They are leading us to a social welfare state, cradle-to-grave society where they create a culture of dependency on the government, not on oneself. It is meant to replace the American idea. And the reason I'm doing a lot of these speeches -- the reason I'm talking about Hegel and Faber and Bismarck, you know, and what those people stood for and what they did and said and all their disciples, you know, in America is because I really believe we've got to have a debate and a political realignment fast because we will win the debate now. We are a center-right country. But if they succeed in moving us faster down the tipping point where more Americans are dependent on the government than upon themselves, where a debt crisis sparked money entitlement explosion brings us to, you know, a really tough fiscal situation, then down the road we may not win that referendum and so that is why I'm trying to, you know, do what I can from my position in congress to sound the alarm bells on what

this agenda really means, what this philosophy's all about and how we need to have a referendum in America in real elections to untangle this mess they created and prevent us from reaching this tipping point where we are a social welfare state, cradle-to-grave society, dependent on the government that lulls us into lies of complicity and dependency versus the America idea of, you know, making the most of your life, equal opportunity, equal natural rights. You know, those are the things that got us where we are and that's why I put this roadmap plan out there. I introduced it three years ago. I put a new version out in January. You can go to my website, Americanroadmap.org. It is a very specific economic and fiscal plan. It's a piece of legislation that says there is an alternative to this progressivist vision for America. There is a way to reapply and reclaim the founding principles in America and still get America back and make this century another American Century appeared that's why I've been, you know, speaking from the hilltop. It's not popular and it's -- and for my party, we can't afford to screw up again. But we've got to get people to stop being worried or afraid of taking on this debate and that's what I'm simply trying to do.

GLENN: Oh, my gosh. Oh, my gosh. I mean, I don't think I've heard a politician, really, I'm looking at my producers. Have we had a politician on this show since when, when we first met Santorum maybe, maybe. DeMint is really, really good but I don't know anybody, not even Santorum, I don't think I've ever heard anybody -- I need to find out more about you, Paul. I don't think I've ever heard anybody --

PAT: Nobody's articulated progressivism like that.

GLENN: --that is articulating the problem in this country and knows what the root is like you have.

PAUL RYAN: Look, I grew up in the orbit of Madison, Wisconsin. I know who these people are, I know what they think, I know what they believe. And so I would just encourage you, go to my roadmap website, read the roadmap.

GLENN: Give me the website.

PAUL RYAN: Americanroadmap.org. Read the full text of the Oklahoma speech, read my in Primus Hillsdale speech on progressivism and healthcare. Those three things right there, I mean, I could go on and on but those three things tell you what I've been trying to lay out and do just from my perch, you know, in congress.

GLENN: Paul, tonight and for the next five nights I am going to be softening the ground. I am laying out an idea of cutting the budget, doing what we did in 1920 after the first progressive --

PAUL RYAN: Yeah, Calvin Coolidge, sure.

GLENN: And I'm going to cut the -- show America that the budget can be cut by 50%. It's going to cause pain, but it has to. It has to be cut or we die. And show a way that we can reduce taxes to be -- do what Georgia did to Russia. Just keep lowering the taxes.

PAUL RYAN: Right.

GLENN: So they could survive. We need to do that. And I'm telling you that it's -- I've been telling the audience it's going to be wildly unpopular. You are going to hate me by the end of the week because everybody will experience pain. But man, I've got to tell ya, I'm not running for anything. If you can get people in Washington to actually stand up and say, I mean, I'll soften the ground and show people why it has to be cut, but we've got to cut this and we need somebody with a spine in Washington that will stand up. I'm -- boy, I hope I don't find out -- you are not like a dirt bag, are you?

PAUL RYAN: Yeah, right.

GLENN: I just don't want to find out, oh, jeez.

PAUL RYAN: Look, I --

GLENN: You don't know Eliot Spitzer --

PAUL RYAN: No.

GLENN: Or anything like that, right?

PAUL RYAN: I'm not running for president. I'm not trying to be somebody else. I'm not trying to be somebody I'm not. I'm not running for president. I'm a ranking member of the budget committee. You know, my background is in economics. That's my aptitude. If you read my roadmap, it is basically a plan that lays out how to relimit government, how to turn these entitlements into individual ownership programs where you are not dependent on the government for all these things, where you are more independent. And how you can basically reclaim the 21st century for the American idea instead of -- and we are very quickly approaching this tipping point in this country.

GLENN: I know.

CALLER: Where I mean, 60% of our fellow citizens right now get more benefits from the federal government in dollar value than they pay back in taxes. So we're already very quickly going down this path. Throw healthcare on top and then cap and trade and implement this Obama budget and you are way down that path.

GLENN: Well, we won't survive that.

PAUL RYAN: So and that's what I lay out on my roadmap. I show you using Congressional Budget Office numbers just how we are going to implode. We have an economic implosion on the horizon. Everybody knows this but nobody's doing anything about it. And that's why I've decided to put this plan out there --

GLENN: God bless you.

PAUL RYAN: -- that has been certified by the CBO as doing what I say it does.

GLENN: Okay.

PAUL RYAN: So I encourage you to take a look at it.

GLENN: I will. Paul, and I would like to stay in touch with you. I appreciate your correcting my error and I apologize for that.

PAUL RYAN: Look, that one blog really misinterpreted what I was trying to say and you know, as you just mentioned in your lead-in, you get misinterpreted sometimes.

GLENN: Well, I'm glad we've cleared it up and we'll stay in touch. Paul Ryan, thank you very much, sir.

PAUL RYAN: Sounds good.

GLENN: Appreciate it. You bet. Bye-bye. Oh, my gosh.

PAT: You weren't already married, I think you would have proposed to him.

GLENN: Oh, my gosh.

PAT: I think you would have proposed to him then. I saw the look in your eye.

GLENN: You know what it is? You know what it is? Hope, why, because someone knows the truth and knows how to articulate it.

PAT: He really does and did. That was really good.

GLENN: Let me ask you something. Let me ask you something. I said that my time would be done when I found somebody else that would articulate it.

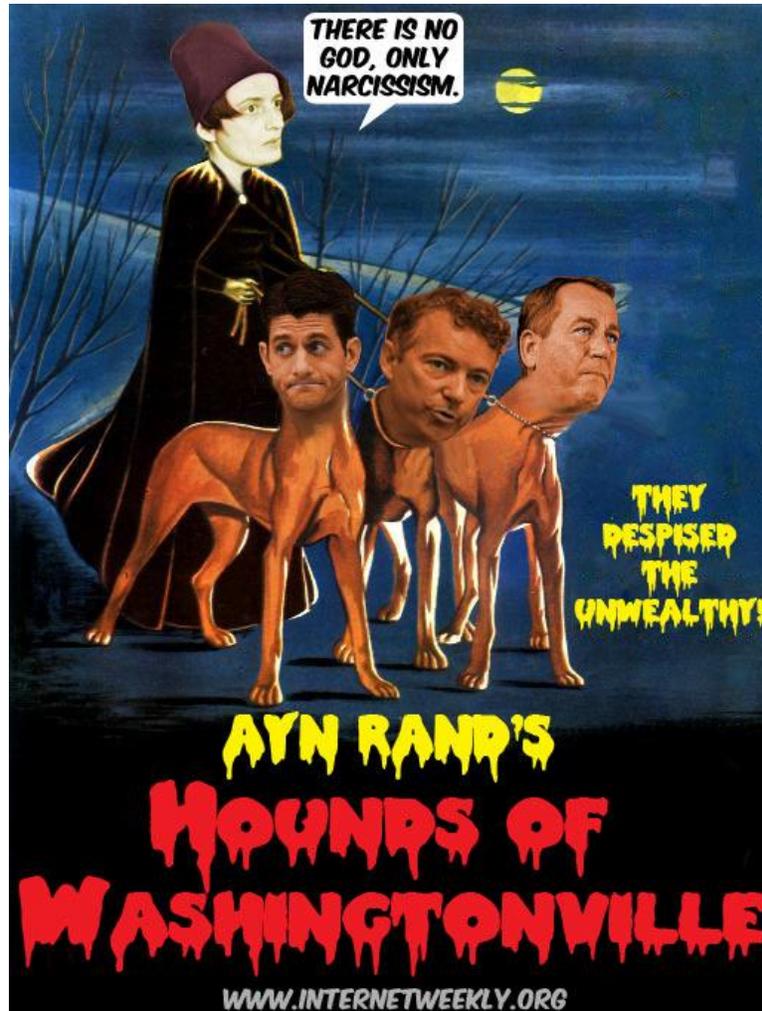
PAT: I think you are in the clear.

GLENN: Can I go home now? Can I go home?

[20120811-18](#) 20:26 SteveB Re: "Glenn's Soulmate?" (reply to SteveG, above)

WOW!

If Glenn Beck loves him, I hate him.



[20120811-19](#) 20:41 SteveB Photo: REPUBLICAN CANNIBALS!

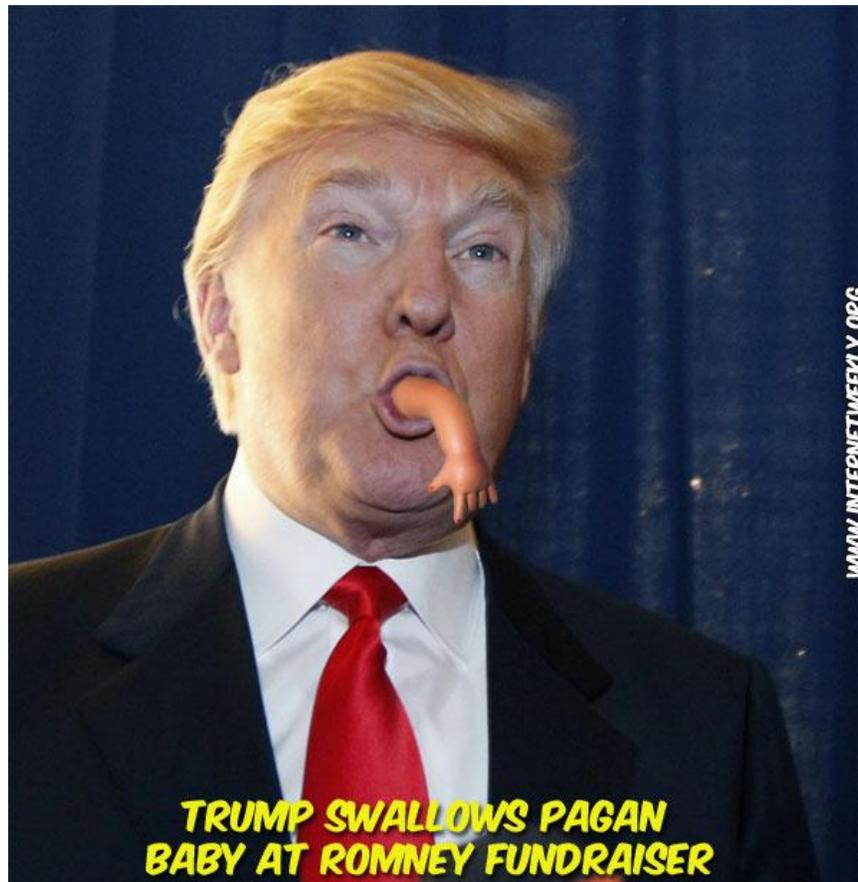
Republican cannibals eat live babies!

I think this is going way too far. These right-wing radicals must be stopped before they eat all the babies!

R0mney is in on it! Hell, he's the baby eater in chief of the GOP!

This is serious! Please pass this on to everyone you know who is not a baby eater. Please! Before it's too late!

I knew those Mormons were up to no good! Disappearing gold plates indeed!



[20120812-07](#) 10:01 SteveBA Re: REPUBLICAN CANNIBALS! (reply to SteveB, above)

So much for intelligent discourse from the crazed hermit of Bolivia.

[20120812-08](#) 10:49 SteveB Re: REPUBLICAN CANNIBALS! (reply to SteveBA, above)

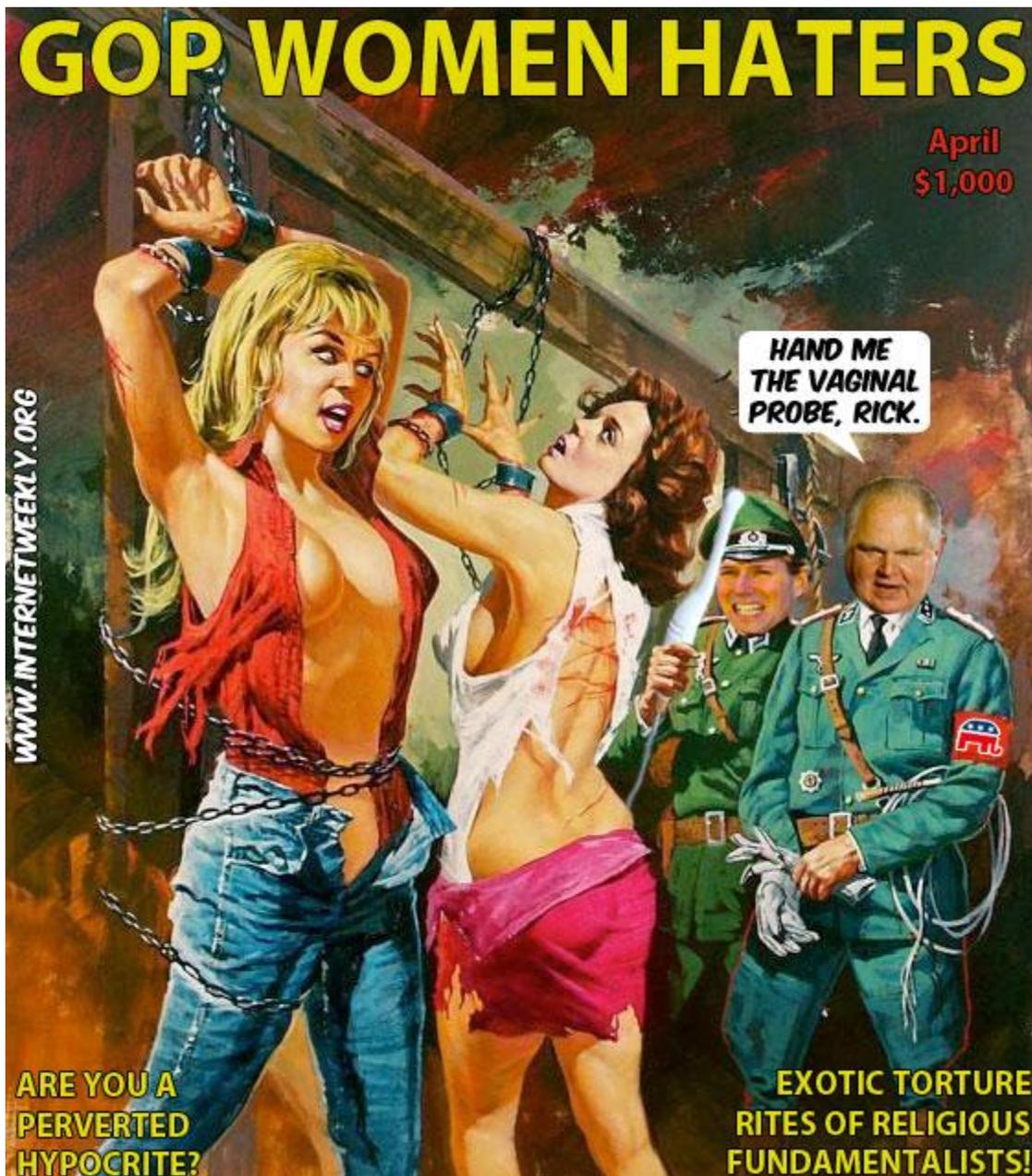
From commenter on NBC: **"Cuts in benefits simultaneous with tax breaks for highest incomes will just not fly, and that's that. It's over."**

Good to hear from you, SteveBA.

[20120812-10](#) 15:33 Art Re: REPUBLICAN CANNIBALS! (reply to SteveBA, above)

Well, I will say that is one for Romney and about 50 for the President at about this level. I think maybe irony may be in play here.

I liked this one too...



One of Paul Ryan's sports – does at his ranch on the border of Texas and Oklahoma.

from (<http://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=noodling>):

A form of fishing in which a crazy person runs into a lake and searches for holes on the bottom with his foot. Then he inserts his finger into the hole and lets something bite it. Hopefully, it's a catfish. If so, he wrestles the catfish to the surface and drags it to shore. If its not a catfish, he may lose his finger to a snapping turtle or his life to a water moccasin. Believe it or not, noodling is illegal in many states.

"How Noodling Works" by Debra Ronca, HowStuffWorks

no date, (<http://adventure.howstuffworks.com/outdoor-activities/water-sports/noodling.htm>)

When most people go fishing, they hop in a boat with a rod and a reel. They spend a relaxing day with their buddies and a cooler of ice-cold drinks, lazily casting out and reeling in.

The fishing technique known as noodling is something completely different. There's no fishing rod. In fact, there's not even a boat. A noodler wades into the muddy water, feels around for a hole and waits for a fish to lurch out and sink its teeth into his hand.

Yep, people voluntarily do this. Noodling sounds easy enough -- stick your hand in the water, pull up a fish. But it's actually quite difficult and dangerous. And, you can't noodle for just any fish. (Noodling for piranhas? Probably a bad idea.) A noodler's fish is the flathead catfish. Since catfish nest in holes or under brush in the water, they're relatively easy to find. The noodler jams a hand into a catfish hole and wiggles his or her fingers, which causes the fish to swim forward and attack the hand by latching on with its teeth. That's when the noodler starts pulling the fish to the surface. For safety reasons, most noodling is done in shallow water; a particularly strong fish could pull a noodler under. It's never wise- to noodle alone.



20120811-22 22:13 Tom Fw: Mitt R0mney Action: Send Me \$15 NOW!

SteveB, look what just started showing up in my e-mail in-box. You can send a donation. ;-)

from Mitt R0mney:

Paul Ryan is a strong conservative leader, and I am proud to have him as my running mate.

He is widely respected for his leadership skills and his intellect, and for his ability to tackle serious issues.

Together, we understand that a limited government and fiscal responsibility will unleash prosperity for all Americans.

Donate \$15 today to help restore America's greatness and build a stronger middle class:

<https://www.mittromney.com/donate>.

Thanks, Mitt R0mney

[Funny, his plans all seem to weaken the middle-class... --SteveB]



Smirking...

[20120812-02](#) 06:21 SteveB Re: Mitt R0mney Action: Send Me \$15 NOW! (reply to Tom, above)

Tom, WOW! The Democrats only ask for \$5! Sometimes \$3! \$15 is way too rich for my blood!

[20120812-01](#) 00:15 Tom Fw: Ann R0mney Action: Donate \$5 for a Bumper Stcker NOW!

Here we go again... Strange I haven't gotten a single e-mail until now! Our FoTM group calls me a Sexual Act done mostly in the Gay community, (Tea Strainer? or something) ;-(((

Romney calls me a just another dumb campaign contributor.

from Ann R0mney:

Dear Fellow Conservative,

What an exciting day! Mitt and I are so thrilled to have Paul Ryan and his wonderful family join America's Comeback Team.

I hope you will display your support for the Romney-Ryan ticket with this bumper sticker. Let your friends and neighbors know that you support the team that will take back America.

Like Mitt said, today is a great day in America, and there are better days ahead. Together, we will ensure a better America for our children and grandchildren:

<http://mi.tt/RR12Sticker>.

Thank you for your support, Ann Romney

[20120812-03](#) 06:32 SteveB Re: Ann R0mney Action: Donate \$5 for a Bumper Stcker NOW! (reply to Tom, above)

Qué?

What do you mean "our FotM group calls" you something? A sex act?

I think you're a little right of me, Tom, :-) but I don't even know if you're a Teabagger or a Tea Strainer, so I hope you're kidding.

I have a feeling you wouldn't be extremely bothered by anyone calling you anything, but you're part of my team and I will jump into the fight.

I believe everyone should be judged by who they are, not by some name someone else wants to give them or wants to believe is them. I get called lots of things myself in this group and I tend not to like it. It seems to me like a coward's way out of an argument and I'm sure you agree.

At the same time, I reserve the right to call any politician anything I want and grant you the same privilege.

Hope you're having a great weekend. Say hello to Ann for me

20120812-04	06:57	SteveB	"Mitt Romney: Paul Ryan Budget Is Not His, Candidate 'Putting Together His Own'"
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Can R0mney ever stop lying? Now he doesn't support Ryan's budget? Then why did he say so many times that he does, then pick Ryan for VP? Is this dude completely insane?

I'm telling you Republicans, the people simply will not stand for this. This pair of frauds is going down in November. Let's make a bet. You think people are stupid enough to elect these two. I'll bet you \$10,000 they are not that stupid!

We're going to keep Medicare, Social Security, and Obamacare, thank you. We're going to tax the rich more. We're going to regulate big business and elections. We'll put an end to this "grand" Republican experiment and make America thrive again.

"Mitt Romney: Paul Ryan Budget Is Not His, Candidate 'Putting Together His Own'" by Sam Stein, Huffington Post

Aug. 11, 2012, (http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/08/11/mitt-romney-paul-ryan-budget_n_1767765.html)

Within minutes of tapping Paul Ryan as his vice presidential nominee, presumptive Republican nominee Mitt Romney was distancing himself from the congressman's controversial budget, which includes steep cuts to government programs and changing Medicare into a voucher-like program.

The Romney campaign sent out talking points on Saturday that made the case that he was his own man on matters of Medicare and Social Security and that he wouldn't be tied to a document he insisted he'd sign into law and once called "marvelous."

The main talking points are below:

Questions and Answers About The Romney/Ryan Ticket:

1. Does this mean Mitt Romney is adopting the Paul Ryan plan?

Gov. Romney applauds Paul Ryan for going in the right direction with his budget, and as president he will be putting together his own plan for cutting the deficit and putting the budget on a path to balance.

Romney's administration will go through the budget line by line and ask two questions: Can we afford it? And, if not, should we borrow money from China to pay for it?

Mitt Romney will start with the easiest cut of all: Obamacare, a trillion-dollar entitlement we don't want and can't afford.

Mitt Romney also laid out commonsense reforms that will make good on our promises to today's seniors and save Social Security and Medicare for future generations.

2. Mitt Romney and Paul Ryan have different views on some policy areas -- like Medicare spending, entitlement reform, labor, etc. -- do you think those differences are going to hurt or help?

Of course they aren't going to have the same view on every issue. But they both share the view that this election is a choice about two fundamentally different paths for this country. President Obama has taken America down a path of debt and decline. Romney and Ryan believe in a path for America that leads to more jobs, less debt and smaller government. So, while you might find an issue or two where they might not agree, they are in complete agreement on the direction that they want to lead America.

Distancing himself from the Ryan budget may be an act of political necessity for Romney, as the proposals -- mainly those for entitlement programs -- have proven unpopular in various congressional district races and public opinion polls.

But it won't be easy, as Romney is on record praising the Ryan budget on multiple occasions.

"I think it'd be marvelous if the Senate were to pick up Paul Ryan's budget and to adopt it and pass it along to the president," he said this March.

Elsewhere, he added: "I spent a good deal of time with Congressman Ryan. When his plan came out, I applauded it as an important step," he said. "We're going to have to make changes like the ones Paul Ryan proposed."

In a Fox News Sunday interview in December 2011, meanwhile, Romney was asked about the Ryan budget as if it were his own plan and responded by arguing the merits of Ryan's approach.

And as pointed out by the Obama campaign, Romney said in an interview with a Milwaukee radio station in March 2012 that he and Ryan had been working "over the last several months" in collaboration on plans "for a tax policy and spending, as well as Medicare reform." Ryan's "proposals and the ones I've outlined in my campaign are very much on the same page," Romney added.

Ryan, for his part, seemed to agree, telling CBS in March that Romney would enact the major parts of his budget as president.

"I'm not expecting everybody to enact every little piece of this," Ryan said. "But, yes, he -- and the other candidates running for president -- have embraced these kinds of reforms because we know it's the best way to save and strengthen the Medicare guarantee, save Medicaid."



[20120812-12](#)

16:12 Art

Re: "Mitt Romney: Paul Ryan Budget Is Not His, Candidate 'Putting Together His Own'" (reply to SteveB, above)

But how do you really feel?

[20120812-05](#)

07:31

MarthaH

Art's Birthday Tomorrow!

Tomorrow [Monday] is Art's birthday... says the little birdie! Just thought others should know, :-))))

[20120812-06](#)

09:43

SteveB

The Blatant Truth

I believe that, in this coming election, we will either vote a resounding NO to the further destruction of our economy by the few...

Or...the policies Republicans said would bring prosperity via capitalism operating under the very "business optimal" conditions they, themselves (under Bush or Clinton) created and, nearly four years later under President Obama, are still fully in effect because of Republicans in Congress...

1. Low taxes (especially for the rich).
2. Big defense spending.
3. Union busting.
4. Slashing education and social programs.
5. Low interest and inflation rates.
6. Huge federal, state, and local deficits.
7. The opposite of prosperity except for the very few very rich.

...will, and I shudder, continue unabated, with the stamp of approval of the electorate.

But, sorry, I don't think the majority of the American people are stupid enough to believe the blatant, hypocritical lie that our dismal economy is all Mr. Obama's fault!

[20120812-11](#) 16:09 Beth Re: The Blatant Truth (reply to SteveB, above)

I agree completely!

[20120812-15](#) 23:58 Art Re: The Blatant Truth (reply to SteveB, above)

Hope you're right but I'm not so sure. There are a lot of really stupid people out there.

[20120812-09](#) 12:33 SteveB "The Ryan Choice"

"The Ryan Choice" by Robert Reich, ChangeofChange

Aug. 12, 2012, (<http://www.nationofchange.org/ryan-choice-1344777565>)

Paul Ryan is the reverse of Sarah Palin. She was all right-wing flash without much substance. He's all right-wing substance without much flash.

Ryan is not a firebrand. He's not smarmy. He doesn't ooze contempt for opponents or ridicule those who disagree with him. In style and tone, he doesn't even sound like an ideologue – until you listen to what he has to say.

It's here — in Ryan's views and policy judgments — we find the true ideologue. More than any other politician today, Paul Ryan exemplifies the social Darwinism at the core of today's Republican Party: Reward the rich, penalize the poor, let everyone else fend for themselves. Dog eat dog.

Ryan's views are crystallized in the budget he produced for House Republicans last March as chairman of the House Budget committee. That budget would cut \$3.3 trillion from low-income programs over the next decade. The biggest cuts would be in Medicaid, which provides healthcare for the nation's poor – forcing states to drop coverage for an estimated 14 million to 28 million low-income people, according to the non-partisan Center for Budget and Policy Priorities.

Ryan's budget would also reduce food stamps for poor families by 17 percent (\$135 billion) over the decade, leading to a significant increase in hunger – particularly among children. It would also reduce housing assistance, job training, and Pell grants for college tuition.

In all, 62 percent of the budget cuts proposed by Ryan would come from low-income programs.

The Ryan plan would also turn Medicare into vouchers whose value won't possibly keep up with rising health-care costs – thereby shifting those costs on to seniors.

At the same time, Ryan would provide a substantial tax cut to the very rich – who are already taking home an almost unprecedented share of the nation's total income. Today's 400 richest Americans have more wealth than the bottom 150 million of us put together.

Ryan's views are pure social Darwinism. As William Graham Sumner, the progenitor of social Darwinism in America, put it in the 1880s: "Civilization has a simple choice." It's either "liberty, inequality, survival of the fittest" or "not-liberty, equality, survival of the unfittest. The former carries society forward and favors all its best members; the latter carries society downwards and favors all its worst members."

Is this Mitt Romney's view as well?

Some believe Romney chose Ryan solely in order to drum up enthusiasm on the right. Since most Americans have already made up their minds about whom they'll vote for, and the polls show Americans highly polarized – with an almost equal number supporting Romney as Obama — the winner will be determined by how many on either side take the trouble to vote. So in picking Ryan, Romney is motivating his rightwing base to get to the polls, and pull everyone else they can along with them.

But there's reason to believe Romney also agrees with Ryan's social Darwinism. Romney accuses President Obama of creating an "entitlement society" and thinks government shouldn't help distressed homeowners but instead let the market "hit the bottom." And although Romney has carefully avoided specifics in his own economic plan, he has said he's "very supportive" of Ryan's budget plan. "It's a bold and exciting effort, an excellent piece of work, very much needed ... very consistent with what I put out earlier."

Romney hasn't put out much but the budget he's proposed would, according to the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, throw ten million low-income people off the benefits rolls for food stamps or cut benefits by thousands of dollars a year, or both.

At the same time, Romney wants to permanently extend the Bush tax cuts to the wealthy, reduce corporate income taxes, and eliminate the estate tax. These tax reductions would increase the incomes of people earning more than \$1 million a year by an average of \$295,874 annually, according to the non-partisan Tax Policy Center.

Oh, did I say that Romney and Ryan also want to repeal President Obama's healthcare law, thereby leaving fifty million Americans without health insurance?

Social Darwinism offered a moral justification for the wild inequities and social cruelties of the late nineteenth century. It allowed John D. Rockefeller, for example, to claim the fortune he accumulated through his giant Standard Oil Trust was "merely a survival of the fittest... the working out of a law of nature and of God."

The social Darwinism of that era also undermined all efforts to build a more broadly based prosperity and rescue our democracy from the tight grip of a very few at the top. It was used by the privileged and powerful to convince everyone else that government shouldn't do much of anything.

Not until the twentieth century did America reject social Darwinism. We created a large middle class that became the engine of our economy and our democracy. We built safety nets to catch Americans who fell downward, often through no fault of their own.

We designed regulations to protect against the inevitable excesses of free-market greed. We taxed the rich and invested in public goods – public schools, public universities, public transportation, public parks, public health – that made us all better off.

In short, we rejected the notion that each of us is on our own in a competitive contest for survival.

But choosing Ryan, Romney has raised for the nation the starkest of choices: Do we want to return to that earlier time, or are we willing and able to move forward — toward a democracy and an economy that works for us all?

20120812-13	18:36	Tom	Movie: <i>Gray State</i>
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<http://youtu.be/Gy7FVXERKFE>

<https://vimeo.com/46700540>

Aug 7, 2012 by [GrayStateMovie](#)

This is an independently produced concept trailer. Please support the film and help it get made into a commercially viable feature film by contributing at <http://www.indiegogo.com/graystatemovie>.

GRAY STATE SYNOPSIS

The world reels with the turmoil of war, geological disaster, and economic collapse, while Americans continue to submerge themselves in illusions of safety and immunity. While rights are sold for security, the federal government, swollen with power, begins a systematic takeover of liberty in order to bring about a New World Order.

Americans, quarantined to militarized districts, become a population ripe for tyrannical control.

Fearmongering, terrorism, police state, martial law, war, arrest, internment, hunger, oppression, violence, resistance -- these are the new terms by which Americans define their existence. Neighbor is turned against neighbor as the value of the dollar plunges to zero, food supplies are depleted, and everyone is a terror suspect. There are arrests. Disappearances. Bio attacks. Public executions of those even suspected of dissent. Even rumors of concentration camps on American soil.

This is the backdrop to an unfolding story of resistance. American militias prepare for guerilla warfare. There are mass defections from the military as true Patriots attempt to rally around the Constitution and defend liberty, preparing a national insurgency against federal forces, knowing full well this will be the last time in history the oppressed will be capable of organized resistance.

It is a time of transition, of shifting alliance, of mass awakening and mass execution. It is an impending storm, an iron-gray morning that puts into effect decades of over-comfort and complacency, and Americans wake up to an occupied homeland. It is a time of lists -- black list, white list, and those still caught in the middle, those who risk physical death for their free will and those who sell their souls to maintain their idle thoughts and easy comforts. It is in this Gray State that the perpetuation of human freedom will be contested, or crushed.

Is it the near future, or is it the present? The Gray State is coming - by consent or conquest. This is battlefield USA.

Watch in 720HD for best quality.

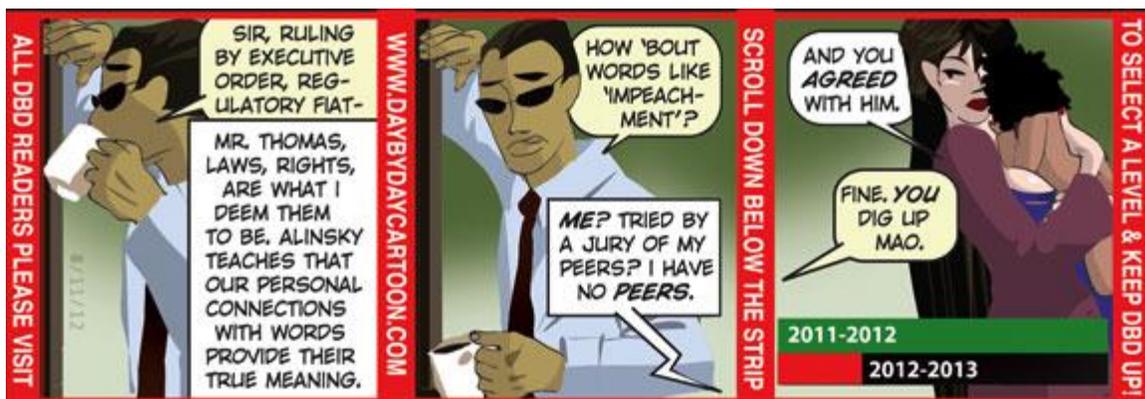
Watch a higher quality version of this trailer at Vimeo at <https://vimeo.com/46700540>.

<http://www.graystatemovie.com>

<http://www.facebook.com/graystatemovie>

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20120812-14 22:26 Tom Cartoon: Peers into the Future



<http://gizmodo.com/5551916/the-gates-of-hell-just-opened-in-guatemala>



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

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

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

Your email address will always be kept strictly confidential.

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

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

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FRIENDS OF THE MIDDLE NEWSLETTER #203 — AUG. 14, 2012

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

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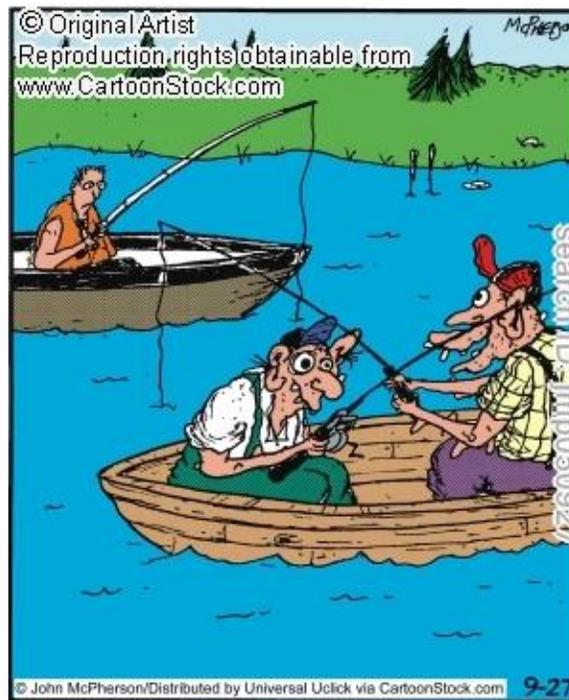
Let the South Go?

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

Maybe the solution to our problems is a divorce, then a grand experiment to see which political philosophy works best—the North's or the South's. My guess is, they'd be clamoring to get back into the Union within ten years.

"Should the South Secede?" by Joshua Holland, AlterNet/Salon

Aug. 12, 2012, (http://www.salon.com/2012/08/12/should_the_south_secede/)



**"Are the fish safe to EAT?! Heck, yeah!
Me and Leon been eatin' 'em for 30 years!"**

(The author of a new book challenges Northerners and Southerners to consider the possibility of a friendly divorce.)

Perhaps we shouldn't be surprised that cultural friction between the North and South persists to this day. After all, we fought an incredibly brutal, ugly Civil War. The battlelines that were drawn then continued to divide us through

the Reconstruction period and well into the middle of the 20th century, as federal troops were once again deployed to enforce the civil rights acts.

According to Chuck Thompson, a veteran travel writer who toured the American South, a degree of mutual enmity between Northerners and Southerners continues to be a source of cultural tension and political gridlock. We remain divided even as we have grown to become the world's superpower. In his new book, *Better Off Without 'Em: A Northern Manifesto for Southern Secession*, Thompson argues that it may be time for a divorce – to shake hands and go our separate ways.

Thompson appeared on last week's AlterNet Radio Hour to discuss his book. A lightly edited transcript of our discussion is below (you can listen to the whole show here).

Joshua Holland: Chuck, you seem to be channeling the frustration of a lot of Northern liberals. I may have even said myself that we should have let the Confederacy walk in 1860. But I haven't heard a lot of people calling to break up the Union today. You're known as a comedic travel writer. So my first question is to what degree are you being tongue-in-cheek here? To what degree are you being serious?

Chuck Thompson: I am being serious. I understand that the meta arguments here that call for secession can be received as somewhat absurd in some corners. I acknowledge that it is probably a remote possibility. Within the framework of that argument I think there is a lot of room to highlight a lot of these problems and a lot of these frustrations that you refer to. One of the goals of this book really was to more or less articulate — to put some facts, figures and research behind — a lot of this frustration of Northern and Southern liberals, of which there are many. I encountered many Southern liberals while conducting my research.

There's this seething frustration people have. There's this kneejerk reaction to blame the South. The sort of Northern media strafing of the South for a lot of the nation's ills is a longstanding tradition. What I wanted to do was to get away from the traditional stereotypes of the dim-witted, mouth-breathing, Southern racist redneck and really look at what's going on today. Find out why people are still having these issues with the South, and put some hard research and some facts and figures behind this general unease with the influence that the South has on the rest of the country.

JH: So we know we have an overtly religious political culture down South, and a culture today that is pretty hostile toward organized labor. What is it in your travels or in your research that prompted you to call for Southern secession?

CT: I get tired of everybody bitching about the problem. It's like what Mark Twain said about the weather. Everybody complains about it, but nobody does anything about it. People have been having this problem with the South for my entire lifetime, and as my research pointed out to me, since even before there was a United States of America. Even in the Continental Congress, before the Declaration of Independence was signed, there were a lot of Southerners from South Carolina – particularly a family called the Rutledge family – sort of running the show back then and didn't want any part of the United States. So a lot of the problems that have arisen between North and South have been around for a long time.

So, as I've said, I've spent a lot of my life hearing from everybody from Seattle to Savannah. Almost every American, at one time or another, has said that it's too bad the country didn't just split when we had the chance. We didn't let the South go when we had the chance. We would have avoided a lot of problems. We – meaning this group in the north as we might identify ourselves – could take the country we want into a direction that we think is befitting of America without this push and pull that comes from the Southern states. At the same time the South could do the same thing.

What really led to this call for secession was understanding that a lot of people from the South are just as sick and tired of people like Barack Obama and Nancy Pelosi and Harry Reid having an impact on their country as I am sick of people like Newt Gingrich and Jeff Sessions, Eric Cantor, and Haley Barbour having an impact on my country.

So why shouldn't each of these societies that are really very different from each other in the way they approach the fundamental building blocks of society – education, religion, commerce, politics ... both sides of the country really

approach their problems in the way they want to put their societies together in very diametrically opposed ways. Why shouldn't people be allowed to live in a pseudo-theocracy if they want to? If the majority of the people in a very large part of the country wants to have the Ten Commandments emblazoned in front of their legislative houses, why shouldn't they be allowed to do so?

My call here for secession isn't really a punitive thing towards the South, though I admit to a lot of these Northern frustrations. It's an effort to identify these differences; to acknowledge that they're very striking and very strong, and to say each one of these sides might be better off without the other.

JH: So we could have a divorce without an excessive amount of acrimony.

CT: I would hope so. Why not?

JH: How are you defining the South? Are we losing the Research Triangle in North Carolina? Are we losing Texas in this deal? And is there any chance we could give them some of the duller states. We're not using South Dakota, are we?

CT: There are some noncontiguous pockets of what would be left of the North that I think would be culturally more comfortable in the South. It's the first question I started off with in doing the research. It's a lot trickier than we might imagine. As for the Research Triangle in North Carolina? Yes, we're going to lose it. Texas is really interesting to me. The best line I heard about Texas during the research was from a student at the University of Georgia who said the Texas state flag is a perfect representation of Texas, in that it looks just like the American flag without all the other states.

Even though Texas was part of the original Confederacy, it's always been an all-around pain in the neck to categorize. They've never really been much of a team player, let's face it. In my breakdown of the South I did not include Texas as a Southern state. I completely acknowledge there's a lot of room for argument there, and that's probably the easiest point in my book to argue against. I could argue both sides of it myself. In the end I decided that Texas would stay with the North in large part for economic reason. Texas is really one of the economic anchors of this country.

JH: So it wasn't just for the barbecue?

CT: Barbecue, cheerleaders and Dr. Pepper.

JH: What about the people who live in those states? It's easy to say they vote for the crappy government they deserve, but consider that in Utah – the reddest state in the country – 30 percent of the population votes Democratic. I'm not saying that voting Democratic is a perfect proxy for one's ideology, but there's a good chunk of people down there who we would be consigning to basically English-speaking Mexico. In Alabama, it's 40 percent. Do you just say, "Here you go, you have to live in a third-world country with crappy education systems, no health care, and a government of snake handlers?"

CT: [Laughing] You're tougher on the South than I am! Let me give you two answers to that. One is that in my imaginary secession legislative framework, I'm building in a period of 10-20 years where there's free and open citizenship for anybody who feels caught on the wrong side of the divide. A tofu-scarfing liberal in Mississippi would be free to come on back over to the North, as well as maybe some survivalist NRA fanatic in the hills of Washington state would be legally entitled to take up residency in the new Confederate homeland. So I've built something into the imaginary structure for that.

The larger point goes back to what I said about even if you consider the argument for secession absurd, it really does give us a lot of room to address other issues. One of those that you allude to in your question is one of Southerners who are not the mouth-breathing, white-supremacist, gun-toting rednecks. That is the stereotype, but the fact of the matter is, that's a minority in the South.

JH: Fifty-seven percent of African Americans live in the American South.

CT: That's right. That's exactly right. One of the big mistakes that people who make these sort of polemics and screeds against the South is that they assume "Southerner" equals conservative white male. Now if you want to be really mean you include "racist" with Southern white male, that's the stereotype.

But let's even say that it's conservative, evangelical Southerners. The fact of the matter is that's not what the whole South is. There are a lot of African Americans in the South. There are increasingly a lot of Hispanics in the South. There are a lot of liberals in the South. There are atheists in the South. One of the things I really try to do with this book was not solely traffic in those easy stereotypes that I think a lot of people trap themselves with. That's not to say I didn't find a lot of those Southern, evangelical, white conservatives. I did and they're in the book, but I also made a huge effort not to define the South solely on the classic Northern stereotypes.

JH: Ultimately, while I share your befuddlement with Southern politics, I have to say that I've traveled extensively in the South. I lived in Arkansas briefly. I love the South, and I've met good, progressive people everywhere I've gone.

CT: What did you love about it?

JH: I love the culture of the South. I love the people of the South. I really had some great experiences dealing with Southerners. Even those Southerners I couldn't necessarily discuss politics with.

I guess a related question is this: We have a really screwy political system with lots of deeply entrenched problems. Do you see anything that could be gained by the South's secession that couldn't be achieved by, say, getting money out of our political system? Or bringing back the fairness doctrine? Maybe reforming the filibuster in the Senate? Do you know what I'm saying? Those things aren't likely to happen in today's environment, but the South splitting away isn't too likely either.

CT: That's right, but a lot of these problems have been deeply entrenched in American society long before this dysfunction befell our political system. Politics is really only one way in which the South is quite a bit different it approaches its society. I think religion is the really big factor here, and I think that's what's really not going to change in the South. Yes, there are evangelicals and religious lunatics in all 50 states in the country. Only in the South, though, do they represent a voting quorum. Only in the South can you appeal to voters in very overtly religious terms and expect success on a consistent basis. Again, that's not to deny that this exists in the rest of the country. It does, but in the South is where its power base is.

I think that is the piece of the puzzle here that informs the politics of the South, in the same way that evangelical Christianity is the least tolerant of any sort of diversity or diversity of opinion. It's Bible literalism. Everything is true and you adhere to everything; it's black and white. When that is the foundation of the majority of the people in your society, when that becomes your whole social framework, then that's the politics that grows out of that society. So we get that same sort of blinkered view of humanity of politicians in the South who come up to the North – we get this absolute, no compromise stance between these hardcore conservatives and other politicians.

When there were Republicans and Democrats fighting it out in the '80s during the Reagan years, there was the famed Tip O'Neill and Ronald Reagan give-and-take. This is how politics works; it's the art of compromise. The ruling power says to the opposition, "We won the election, so we're going to get these big things. Don't give us too much trouble and we'll work with you. We realize you have a constituency. Let us get our big things through without a lot of hassle, and we'll make sure you're taken care of on some level." That's sort of how it has worked for the most part. In the South, it's different, because there is no such thing as compromise. If it's God's law that is driving you — if God says gay marriage is an abomination, if God says abortion is an abomination — then you simply can't compromise. That's not in your DNA if you really believe that. That's where I think a lot of the dysfunction of our political process comes into play.

And I don't think that's going to change, regardless of whether you pull the money out of it or not. This ties into how the South deals with education. Southern states don't typically fund their public schools the way other states do – they're typically at a much lower level. There's less commitment to the ideal of public education in the Southern states than there is in the rest of the country. That's why we see over and over when the statistics come out, the South has the lowest SAT scores, lowest graduation rates, the most illiteracy. Whatever measures you want

to put on academic performance, it's those core Southern states that are always leading the bottom of the back. In the bottom 10, eight or nine of them are always going to be Southern states.

I wanted to look into this. Why is that? Is it just that Southerners are stupider than the rest of us? Clearly that's not the case. It's the same gene pool. The more you look at it the more you realize there's just a lower commitment to public education in the South than there is in the rest of the country. That's been going on for hundreds of years. It's not changing.

I was in Arkansas. I spent a week in Little Rock while they were searching for a new superintendent of schools last year. The dysfunction that I saw just in attending these public meetings where they were talking about what they needed was astonishing.

JH: We see a lot of liberal animosity towards the South. Were you at all concerned in writing this book about whether you would reinforce the stereotype of the coastal, elite liberals looking down their noses at the middle and the South? Was this a concern?

CT: Sure, people are going to jump to that conclusion. As you know — and as I found out in writing web articles and books — most of the really heated criticism you get from people are always from people who don't even bother to read your article or your book in the first place. That's going to happen. There's nothing I can do about it. I really did make an effort not to be strident — though I'm certainly judgmental — and to find good things in the South, which there are. You deal with Southerners on an individual basis and they're great. They're friendly, hospitable, gregarious, and they like to party. They like to drink, to give you their food, they like to play music. It's a lot of fun.

I didn't try to be this super-strident jerk who was just sitting there bashing. I really am trying to put some numbers and some facts to this argument. These are two very different societies that have been economic and social frenemies from the day they were founded. The dysfunction has got to stop at some point.



<http://www.thegatewaypundit.com/2011/03/figures-government-to-hold-terror-drill-with-illegal-aliens-as-victims-to-white-anti-immigrant-terrorists/>

20120813-01 06:32 SteveB & Art HB!

SteveB: Happy Birthday, Art! Hope you have a great one!

Art: Thanks Steve. Fire Dept was busy so we had to call off the cake.

SteveB: :-)

[Source of original email unknown. -SteveB]

Coil of Rage

When you've read the end, come back and read this first paragraph again. The character of any man is defined by how he treats his mother as the years pass. Need I say more about this person below other than there is no character, no integrity, but there is a ton of attitude and arrogance that defines his shallow past and hollow future.

I rest my case.

I bought and read Obama's book, *Audacity of Hope*. It was difficult to read considering his attitude toward us and everything American. Let me add a phrase he uses to describe his attitude toward whites. He harbors a "COIL OF RAGE". His words not mine.

THIS IS OUR PRESIDENT -- HE'S RUNNING AGAIN, YOU KNOW!

Is anyone out there awake?

Everyone of voting age should read these two books by him: Don't buy them, just get them from the library.

From *Dreams from My Father*: "I ceased to advertise my mother's race at the age of 12 or 13, when I began to suspect that by doing so I was ingratiating myself to whites."

From *Dreams from My Father*: "I found a solace in nursing a pervasive sense of grievance and animosity against my mother's race."

From *Dreams from My Father*: "There was something about her that made me wary, a little too sure of herself, maybe and white."

From *Dreams from My Father*: "It remained necessary to prove which side you were on, to show your loyalty to the black masses, to strike out and name names."

From *Dreams from My Father*: "I never emulate white men and brown men whose fates didn't speak to my own. It was into my father's image, the black man, son of Africa, that I'd packed all the attributes I sought in myself: the attributes of Martin and Malcolm, DuBois and Mandela."

And FINALLY and most scary:

From *Audacity of Hope*: "I will stand with the Muslims should the political winds shift in an ugly direction."

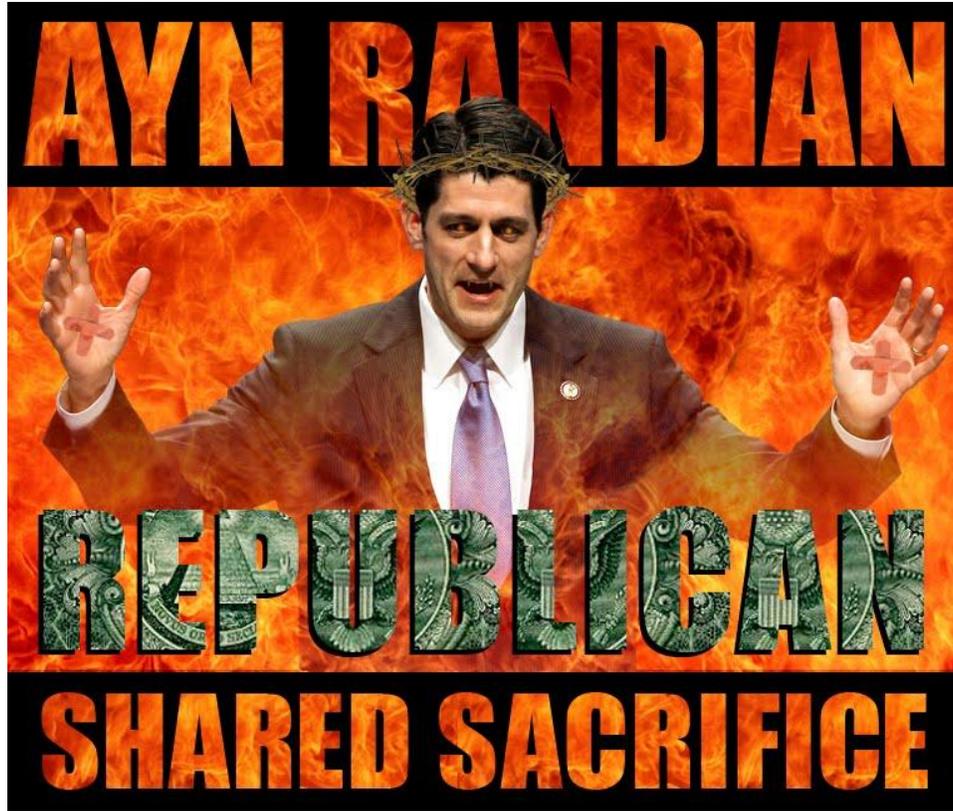
If you have never forwarded an e-mail, now is the time to do so!!! We have someone with this mentality running our GREAT nation! Keep your eye on him and don't blink.

I don't care whether you are a Democrat, a Republican, a Conservative or a liberal, be aware of the attitude and character of this sitting President.

Your email is simply more old LIES for the gullible. For the truth, see:

<http://www.snopes.com/politics/obama/coilofrage.asp>.

Have a nice day.



"For Billionaires, a Heaven on Earth Beckons" by Sam Pizzigati, NationofChange/Campaign for America's Future

Aug. 13, 2012, (<http://www.nationofchange.org/billionaires-heaven-earth-beckons-1344865458>)

(A few frenzied super-rich political donors have apparently gulped the Kool-Aid of America's delusional right wing.)

Why do the mega rich in the United States feel so put upon? Their incomes are rising, after all, and the taxes they pay have never been lower since the 1920s.

In fact, even if lawmakers in Congress passed 100 percent of President Obama's tax plan, America's rich would still be paying taxes at less than half the top rate that America's richest faced back in the 1950s.

America's wealthiest, given this ever so friendly political lay of the land, ought to be kicking back and living care-free. But that's not happening. This election cycle appears to have America's super rich in a feverish frenzy. They're pouring money into the 2012 elections at all-time record rates.

What's behind this deluge of campaign cash? A few frenzied super-rich political donors have apparently gulped the Kool-Aid of America's delusional right wing. President Obama, these crazed deep pockets almost seem to believe, has tumbrils waiting to cart them off to the guillotines once he wins a second term.

But most of our super rich remain eminently reality-based. They know full well that the rich in other major developed nations face political challenges far more unnerving than anything that confronts deep pockets in the United States.

In France, for instance, the lawmakers elected this past spring will be taking action this September to raise the tax rate on income over 1 million euros, the equivalent of \$1.24 million, from 44 to 75 percent.

The tax plan President Obama has announced, by contrast, will only hike the top-bracket U.S. rate from 35 to 39.6 percent — and no one in Congress has anything remotely close to a majority for going beyond what the President is proposing.

So why do America's super rich feel compelled to plow so many billions into politics? They already live in the most rich people-friendly developed nation in the world. What else could they possibly want? Well, they could want Singapore.

To be more precise: Many of America's richest see no reason why they shouldn't be able to live in a nation that treats the "successful" and their fortunes with as much respectful deference that locales like Singapore so openly display.

And just how much deference does Singapore extend to its resident rich? Last week, in a vividly detailed new paper on Singapore's tax system, three analysts from the Deloitte global financial consulting network described how extraordinarily rich people-friendly a modern economy can be.

In Singapore, the Deloitte analysts relate, residents pay no more than 20 percent of any income dollar over \$250,000 in taxes. And many income dollars over \$250,000 face no tax carve-out at all — since Singapore levies no tax on capital gains, the profits from buying and selling stocks and other assets.

Singapore also doesn't bother taxing any income that its richest residents grab from abroad, even if these residents have that income remitted into Singapore. Residents instead only face taxes on their "Singapore-source income."

The rich who reside in Singapore don't even have "to report their foreign bank accounts or other foreign financial assets" to Singapore's version of the IRS.

Nor do Singapore's wealthy have to worry about their grand fortunes shrinking once they pass on to the hereafter. Singapore hasn't had an estate tax on the books since early in 2008.

Some Americans seem to find this total tax package that Singapore offers absolutely irresistible. In 2009, the U.S. embassy in Singapore reports, 58 Americans renounced their citizenship and set up residence in Singapore. In 2010, that total apparently hit close to 100.

Singapore certainly has its charms, but most tax break-hungry Americans of means don't seem particularly eager to take up residence for at least 183 days a year. Their alternate endgame: bring Singapore stateside. In places like Singapore, these Americans see a vision of what the United States could become.

A vision too far-fetched? Not at all. GOP White House hopeful Mitt Romney has already pronounced his support for dropping the federal tax rate on top-bracket income down to 28 percent, a point nearly halfway from the current 35 percent top rate in the United States to Singapore's 20 percent.

And Romney's newly announced running mate, House Budget Committee chairman Paul Ryan, has already proposed eliminating taxes on capital gains.

America's rich have come a long way over the past half-century. Why couldn't they go further, to full-fledged Singapore-style status? The more important question: Will we let them?

An article worth reading...

"Government vs. Prosperity" by Martin D. Weiss, Money and Markets

Aug. 13, 2012, (<http://www.moneyandmarkets.com/government-vs-prosperity-50274?FIELD9=1>)

As the once-united Europe comes unglued at the seams...

As the once-powerful Federal Reserve runs out of cures for a sick economy...

And as our once-proud Treasury marches blindly toward a fiscal cliff...

I have conducted a wide search — beyond economic theory or financial numbers — for a deeper understanding of what ails America and its allies.

I have crisscrossed the globe four times this year.

I have personally spoken with hundreds of average citizens in BRIC countries — Brazil, Russia, India, and China ... in the PIIGS countries — Portugal, Italy, Ireland, Greece and Spain ... in former miracle-growth countries like Japan...in Africa and Oceania...and of course, in the U.S.

Nearly everywhere, I find a single, overarching emotion is paramount:

The fear that bungling governments are destroying — or about to destroy — what little is left of our peace and prosperity.

In Western Europe, as the entire continent sinks into a double-dip recession, the fear has spread from the PIIGS countries to France, England and even Germany.

In Japan, similar fears — long ridiculed by officials and ignored by the press — are once again bubbling to the surface.

And in the U.S., the fear of a fiscal cliff — less than five months away — has now pervaded corporate boardrooms, putting new investments on hold and prompting sharp cutbacks in hiring.

What is the common thread in this global fear and where does it come from?

For an answer, I have conducted an even wider search in the realm of ideas, and I have discovered a new book by a *New York Times* bestselling author who stands heads and shoulders above his contemporaries.

The book is *Red and Blue and Broke All Over*.

The author is Charles Goyette, an investment expert and political analyst who has earned raving praise from Congressman Ron Paul, Judge Andrew Napolitano, and Lew Rockwell — chairman of the prestigious Ludwig von Mises Institute.

Mr. Goyette has written more — and has a more fundamental understanding of — the true causes of the impending fiscal cliff than anyone I know.

So I recommend you take a short time off from the drumbeat of financial data to gain a better understanding of the forces behind it.

They are political forces that could doom your investments if you ignore them ... or multiply your money if you harness them.

Below is our abridged version of Charles' Introduction and Chapter One. For the entire story, be sure to read this blockbuster new book from cover to cover.

Government vs. Prosperity

Fly over populated centers along the U.S.-Mexico border.

On the North side, you will typically see broad, paved highways and neat rows of middle-class homes; on the south side, many dirt roads and mostly poorer homes.

What accounts for the difference?

Or look at a satellite image of the Korean peninsula at night. The brightly lit area is South Korea; the dark area, North Korea.

Both nations share the same people, language, cultural history and resources. And yet the South is dynamic and developed; the North, mired in poverty.

Why?

Or visit the cities and backwoods of Russia, the world's largest nation, with nearly twice the land mass of the U.S. and boasting vast natural resources.

Compare what you see there to tiny Hong Kong, confined to a rocky, mountainous island with no natural resources to speak of — a country one twentieth the size of Russia, with three times better per-capita income ... and 14 years more in average life expectancy.

Why the stark differences between these three sets of countries?

The answer: Freedom works!

[Sorry, there's actually probably more freedom in Mexico than the U.S. —SteveB]

Most of Mexico's primary industries have long been owned or controlled by the central government.

North Korea is a police state, controlling not only the economy, but also the sciences, religion, education, the arts and even the daily thoughts of citizens.

And needless to say, under the Soviet Union, Russia's economy was also centrally planned. For nearly the entire 20th century, the nation had virtually no free markets.

But these are not the only countries severely damaged by government controls.

According to a study conducted by the Heritage Foundation, free — or mostly free — countries enjoy incomes more than ten times the incomes in economies defined as controlled and repressed.

Even if you know about this generally, you will find the numbers shocking.

But what's most shocking of all is that...

The United States Is Traveling Down the Same Dangerous Road.

The Departments of the Treasury, Labor, and Agriculture, Commerce, Energy, Health and Human Services, SEC, FEMA, OSHA, EPA and other U.S. government agencies are maintaining their grips on the American economy and people ... while expanding their intrusion into our lives with each passing day.

Meanwhile...

- The U.S. Supreme Court has ruled that police may kick down your front door without a warrant if they say they smell something in your home.
- The U.S. Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals has ruled that you do not have a reasonable expectation of privacy in your own driveway.
- The same court has ruled that federal agents can legally plant a secret GPS device on the bottom of your car and track your every movement without a warrant.
- Thousands of American travelers are being virtually strip-searched daily by scanners that produce detailed images of your body through their clothing.
- The federal government dictates which pain medications and cold remedies you can use ... whether you have too much cash ... the mileage your car must get ... which type of shower head, toilet and light bulbs you are allowed to buy ... and much more.

And we're already beginning to pay the price:

Santa Rosa, Colorado Springs, Rockford Illinois, Atlanta and dozens of other cash-strapped cities across the nation are turning off street lights at night to save money.

In many areas, the cost of maintaining paved streets has become so prohibitive, the pavement has been ground up and returned to gravel ... or roads have been left to erode.

The U.S. government mails over 88 million checks a month. Nearly 46 million Americans are on food stamps and 50 million on Medicaid.

And it's no coincidence that activities most firmly under government control are also those that have suffered the worst declines: The U.S. postal service. Public education. And many more.

The few bright spots: Industries in which technological advances are so rapid, Washington can't quite catch up with them to interfere as much as it would like to.

A Bipartisan Threat

Both Democrats and Republicans have sponsored the tremendous growth of government.

And both have voted for the massive government spending of recent years.

But if the "heroics" of government spending — trillions in bailouts, rescue plans, stimulus spending, subsidies, and debt monetization — had resulted in real production, it would be a different story:

The economy would be robust, unemployment would be low, and Americans would be wealthier.

Instead, the money has been used destructively. Good money has been taken from people who made sound economic decisions and given to investment bankers who made reckless decisions.

Productive people have been taxed to buy worthless paper from billionaires who should have known better than to buy it for themselves.

We've seen cash for clunkers, cash for caulkers, cash for appliances, cash for unions, cash for government buildings, and even cash for the wives of fabulously wealthy Wall Street tycoons.

Result...

It has been generations since Americans' faith in the economy has been this badly rattled.

The American dream, based on home ownership, the certainty that things will continually improve, the assurance of a comfortable retirement, and the assumption that our children will have a better life than we had, is being shaken by deep-seated concerns that our prosperity may be taking a giant step backward.

This is not so difficult. We can easily identify the dynamic growth of prosperity throughout history.

In fact, the story of mankind has been one of ever more freedom accompanied by growing — indeed, by an explosion of — human prosperity.

Unfortunately, however, just about all we can see in Washington is...

Politics as Usual

Our freedom has been double-teamed by Republicans and Democrats alike; it has been sucker-punched by the red gloves of one and has taken a hit on the blind side by the blue gloves of the other.

Both parties are to blame for the fading of the American dream. Einstein's oft-cited observation that no problem can be fixed from the same consciousness that created it applies to the deflating promise of America.

So the restoration of the American dream will not occur as long as the political discussion remains constrained by the old voices of the Republicans and Democrats who marched us into our present economic morass.

A recent ABC News/*Washington Post* poll found a mere twenty-six percent of Americans are optimistic about "our system of government and how well it works." That's a record low.

Among the disenfranchised are people who have seen their jobs disappear, their savings exhausted, and their homes foreclosed.

They are people whose hopes for retirement have gone dry; whose expectations for their children's future have withered.

Some are angry that their own responsibility is being rewarded with the bill for bailing out the irresponsible.

Others are distraught that their faith in the empty assurances by government — such as Social Security and Medicare — now threatens to prove their undoing.

Some feel remorse for the past; others fear the future.

What has happened to our prosperity? What has become of the American dream?

There can be no doubt that the scale of government debt means a lower standard of living for the American people.

But that is only part of the story. As foreboding as the debt may be, the obstacles to renewed opportunity and well-being go beyond what the numbers reveal.

Under the cloak of the Republican and Democrat orthodoxy that approved the debt as it compounded, other ideas were smuggled into America's economic life.

They were ideas that seek to subordinate the individual — generally by economic and authoritarian measures — to the will of the state.

These ideas and practices were especially prominent in the mortgage meltdown and its ongoing aftermath — when Republican and Democratic majorities alike insisted on socializing the losses of private banks and corporations, while guaranteeing their profits were theirs to keep.

The country is financially insolvent because the Washington parties, red and blue alike, are philosophically bankrupt. Their shared statist philosophy needs to be exposed before it does us any more harm.

Prosperity

Prosperity is something much greater than wealth. Prosperity refers to the wellsprings of human ingenuity and enterprise from which long-term wealth and human improvement bubble forth.

The ancient Romans made important contributions to the implementation and refinement of property rights.

They established trading colonies as far away as the east coast of the Indian subcontinent before the time of Christ.

They developed civil engineering skills that enabled them to build roads, aqueducts, and other marvels that supported populations that could barely have been conceived elsewhere in antiquity.

They created long-term prosperity for themselves. The later plunderers of Rome got wealth, emptying the treasury of the empire, but they did not get prosperity.

Similarly despite billions in cash that has flowed into the Persian Gulf oil states for generations, that money has not been turned into long-term prosperity for its peoples, as the seething discontent that spawned 2011's Arab Spring revolutions in the Middle East has shown.

The Saudi royal family, the Al Sabahs of Kuwait, and Libya's Kaddafis have had their palaces with gold bathroom fixtures, but the capital is spent abroad in places where opportunities abound. When the wells of the desert kingdoms run dry, so, too, will the wealth.

Freedom and Wealth

To say that freedom creates prosperity is convenient shorthand.

To be more precise, freedom provides a conducive environment in which prosperity, the dynamic of wealth creation, can function.

What is this dynamic? Where does wealth come from? We ourselves are its creators. It is the nature of man to provide himself food and shelter, to improve his circumstances, to discover, to invent, to refine, and to expand.

When free to do so, he creates wealth, creates it again, and creates it anew.

The presence of petroleum was a nuisance to Pennsylvania farmers until in 1849 someone discovered how to refine kerosene. John D. Rockefeller's fortune was begun in refining kerosene, although before long a man named Thomas Edison had invented a way to light homes that was superior, and Rockefeller's business had to adjust.

The distribution of alternating current discovered by Nikola Tesla was commercially superior to the direct current Edison built his company on and Edison Electric was forced to adapt to the new improvement.

Wealth is created by the greatest resource of all: human beings. It is people who continually discover lesser resources and put them to use in new ways.

Look about at all the wealth people have created. Buildings and homes, schools and churches, stores and places of entertainment; leisure and literacy and libraries; heating and cooling systems; bright lives of bright lights, bright colors, and stunning clothing; marvels of electronics, digital magic, and the miracle of global communications; new medical techniques, devices, and medicines; high-speed travel and stores stocked full of food, much of it fresh from around the world.

A return to the path of prosperity does not lie in legislative prescriptions, new programs or new plans for what the state must do.

Our prosperity will not be restored by some new tax-cut proposal or new spending initiative; no laws will do it; no charming candidate.

Our problem transcends any mechanical solutions or reform package. We are beyond the ability to fix our problems with process tinkering.

As congressman Ron Paul has noted, "It's not a budgetary problem. The budget is a symptom of this disease. Americans have to inquire into the nature of government itself."

The State's Impunity

The state has no money that it has not first taken from someone.

And this era of rising gas prices should help concentrate attention on the point: As you reach into your front pocket to fill your gas tank at prices that would have been thought obscene just a few years ago, the Department of Energy is taking \$30 billion a year from your back pocket.

What does it do with your billions? Does it explore the remote and dangerous corners of the earth and discover any oil? Does it take enormous risks in hazardous oceans and arctic conditions and suffer substantial losses to locate energy? Recover it, refine it, and transport it to your neighborhood? Just how much gas does it put in your tank for its \$30 billion?

Not a drop. Just as the government pumps no gas, it builds no house and it grows no corn.

And when it does appear to grow corn, for example, in the provision of food subsidies, it only does so by taking seeds from a man who then cannot grow his own.

Because even what it appears to create is only accomplished with the labor of someone else who would have used his labor for his own preferences or from money taken by people who are now precluded from acquiring what they prefer.

The state could have provided an environment of freedom so that prosperity could flourish, as intended. It could have stood against coercion, on watch for force and fraud. Instead, it has become a fearsome cause of coercion, and an agent of force and fraud itself.

Without instruction by the state, the American people know perfectly well how to create wealth. They do it by doing what they've always done.

They do it by going to work every day, by saving when they can, by taking pride in their work, by buying and selling, by coming up with new ideas around their kitchen tables, by developing good habits such as thrift and punctuality, by looking for better jobs, by looking for better products, by selling better products and by honoring the fundamental principles of right and wrong.

The gifts of the free economy add up, multiply, and compound.

But in our contemporary experience, the state has become ravenous in directing and commandeering our productivity. Innovation is stunted. Dependency spreads. Capital spots safer havens elsewhere.

Because political connections become a more effective means of getting things done than industriousness, public policy becomes capricious.

A free economy means people are free to trade. Throughout history trade has been a means of illuminating mankind, spreading algebra and alphabets, steering discoveries in navigation, geography, and time measurement, driving transportation improvements and road construction.

Trade pollinates human culture, nourishes our humanity and inseminates our intellectual life with new foods and medicine, new ideas and arts, new inventions' technologies, and products.

Why then does the state serve as a frequent impediment to trade? Why is the trade language of the state dressed in bellicosity? It speaks of unfair trade and trade from which we need protection. If there are trade "hostilities," then trade "confrontations" are triggered. It blocks trade, erects trade barriers, and seeks to overcome them or to "retaliate."

By prohibiting exchanges that enrich us, the state makes us poorer. Where does the state derive the coercive power to stop free trade among free people? People cannot be both free and prohibited from buying and selling; coercion and liberty cannot occupy the same space at the same time.

But there is nothing the state does quite as incessantly as meddle in prices.

When state price meddlers fix prices artificially low, it distorts the equilibrium of supply and demand and creates scarcity. It may drive important producers out of business. When the state artificially raises prices, the resulting distortion is surpluses.

People who now must pay those higher prices do so at the expense of other goods and services in the economy that go un-purchased. Not only is some other need unmet, but every price received is also a price paid.

In artificial price-fixing, just as in the case of trade interference, the state is favoring one citizen (or party to a transaction) over another.

It is state lunacy that forces us to pay for huge agricultural price supports in the morning, making food more expensive, while in the afternoon we pay for food stamps to lower the cost of food for some.

Price supports for tobacco growing come out of the taxpayers' left pocket; federal antismoking programs out of the right.

Seniors looking outside the country for affordable prescription drugs risked federal prosecution for it, even as the government enacted a prescription drug benefit plan to lower costs, a plan that now faces a liability of \$19 trillion.

We go to war to protect oil supplies overseas even as we slap on import tariffs to keep cheap Brazilian ethanol from coming into the country.

In one year, government creates tax advantages that encourage the purchase of Hummers and huge SUVs; in another year, your income taxes go to pay people to junk their gas-guzzlers and buy smaller cars.

The state takes money from you to give to sugar producers, and then it takes more to nag you not to use so much sugar.

The Kafkaesque absurdity of funding these mutually conflicting activities is made worse because we are impoverished by the madness along the way.

If Americans wish to reclaim their prosperity they must embrace freedom.

That's it. Just freedom. Because by now the extent of our economic calamity should be apparent to everyone.

And that means the state . . . must . . . JUST . . . STOP!

It must stop the big things it does that collapse our freedom. Things like price-fixing and the Patriot Act, endless wars of invasion or occupation.

It must stop favoring the influential and politically connected by interfering with trade.

It must stop the bailouts and stimulus programs of both the Republicans and Democrats. It must just stop.

It must stop the destruction of the monetary system by the Federal Reserve.

It must stop the endless spending of Keynesian economics, an academic pretext that has encouraged trillions in deficit spending and left America staggering down a desolate road of long-term indebtedness.

The advice of British mathematician John Maynard Keynes that unemployment and recessions can be cured by creating artificial demand in the economy — that government can kick-start the economy by spending money it doesn't have or by driving down interest rates by printing money — has been the prevailing creed of Republicans and Democrats since the Great Depression.

Keynes' advice failed to end the Great Depression, which didn't end until state spending collapsed after the war.

[This is as false a statement as I have ever read! –SteveB]

It failed again in the stagflation of the 1970s when, according to the Keynesian theory, the impossible happened: the high inflation it recommended coincided with the sharp recession and rising unemployment it promised to fix.

And it continues to fail today, draining our prosperity and bleeding the purchasing power of the dollar, even as it has jacked up the visible portions of the national debt from \$9 trillion when the recession began in December 2007 to today's \$16 trillion.

Because the madness of this Keynesian meddling can only make our crisis worse, it cannot be allowed to continue.

The state must stop.

That's the formula for restoring the prosperity of the American people, for making the men and women and children of America and their families better off.

20120813-06 14:20 SteveB Re: "Government vs. Prosperity" (reply to SteveM, above)

Sorry, Steve, I find this article to be total bullsh*t.

This guy is doing nothing but trying to sell fear for a profit (by selling books). Just like Beck and Limbaugh, etc. Fear for a profit! And Republican politicians: fear for power!

There's not one single meaningful fact in this entire article.

America rejected this cr*p many years ago, for very good reason.

Here are the facts: right now, in America the rich have had their way for a long time now. They pay almost no taxes. They've been deregulated to nearly total freedom, even freedom to eliminate all American jobs and move their companies to Singapore or wherever, freedom to offshore their wealth, financial freedom to create bubbles, etc., etc.

For this, they promised growth, prosperity, jobs. Where are they? China? Not in the U.S. Where is the promised prosperity? We've been raped by your team! If America is in decline it's because of Republicans! Their dogma does not work and the last 40 years of American economics proves it.

Oh, no! It's all the black guy's fault! LOL! What an easy, simple, yet dangerously stupid conclusion! Our problems lie elsewhere. America is corrupted, not by a black man or the poor, but by the rich! It's as simple as that.

Have a nice day.

20120813-07	14:47	SteveB	Fw: Dennis Kucinich Action: Watch Our Video & Contribute!
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from Dennis Kucinich:

What a summer it has been. We launched Kucinich Action last month, and we have certainly been active.

Over the past few weeks, we have extended ourselves to help candidates across the country. In Washington, Florida, Hawai'i, Massachusetts, California, New Mexico, Michigan, and other states, we have advocated on behalf of candidates in tough primaries.

But this is just the beginning. Kucinich Action is about making sure that the next Congress is one that is going to reflect the concerns you have. We need allies in the fight to restore honesty and integrity in our government, stand for peace, and further the causes of social and economic justice and human rights.

We have big plans for the next few months, and we need your help to get there. Please click here to watch our video update and make a contribution. Any amount - \$5, \$10 or \$15 - will help us to continue our efforts and keep our new organization growing.

Video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=WdDizXhjEb4.

We have even bigger plans for the next few months. We are going to step up our work on behalf of candidates and help change the outcome in multiple races this fall. Most importantly, we are going to open our process up to you and have you help decide how to direct our efforts.

Please help us step up our efforts and make a contribution today:

<https://donate.kucinich.us/page/contribute/120813>.

Let us continue to lead the way forward. Please join me. Together we can meet any challenge. Together we will restore peace, liberty and social and economic justice to this land we love.

Thank you, Dennis Kucinich

20120813-08	16:41	SteveM	Video: Michelle Obama's 'All This for a Damn Flag' Shown at Three Different Speeds
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<https://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=endscreen&v=OJgWMI0hch8&NR=1>

20120813-09	17:37	SteveB	Re Video: Michelle Obama's 'All This for a Damn Flag'... (reply to SteveM, above)
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This is just more lies from the far-right lie-machine. Here's the truth:

<http://urbanlegends.about.com/od/barackobama/ss/Michelle-Obama-Vs-The-U-S-Flag.htm>.

Have a nice day.

[20120813-10](#) 18:12 SteveB Exxon for President!

The 14th Amendment defines citizenship this way: "All persons born or naturalized in the United States, and subject to the jurisdiction thereof, are citizens of the United States and of the State wherein they reside."

If a corporation is a person, and that "person" was born in the U.S., then, I guess, under the 14th Amendment, that "person" could be considered (by "some" Supreme Court) to be a "citizen". It only depends upon the changing legal definition of "born" or "naturalized". Clarence could do that in a snap!

Why, in the future, couldn't a corporate "citizen" run for President?

Is there anything in the Constitution which would forbid such a thing? NOT ONCE CORPORATIONS ARE DEFINED AS "PERSONS"!!!! (Unless maybe a court could decide that they are persons who are neither "born or naturalized," but, then, how could they be persons.)

GACK!

[20120813-12](#) 18:17 Ben Re: Exxon for President! (reply to SteveB, above)

Yeah, that corporations as persons BS is so bogus it makes me want to wretch, too, and has since the first time I heard it.

One man/woman, one vote. That's it. That's all it should be. If these corporations feel they are so wonderful that their views should influence government, let them treat their employees and customers so well that said actual voters honor the sacred company's doctrines by supporting them at the polls.

[20120813-11](#) 18:14 Josie Fw: Social Security = Entitlement?

[Source of original email unknown. -SteveB]

SOCIAL SECURITY NOW CALLED 'FEDERAL BENEFIT PAYMENT' / ENTITLEMENT!

Have you noticed, your Social Security check is now referred to as a "federal benefit payment"?

I'll be part of the one percent, to forward this, our government gets away with way too much in all areas of our lives, while they live lavishly on their grossly overpaid incomes!

KEEP passing THIS AROUND UNTIL EVERY ONE HAS READ IT...

This was sent to me, I am forwarding it because it does touch a nerve in me.

Remember, not only did you contribute to Social Security but your employer did too. It totaled 15% of your income before taxes. If you averaged only \$30K over your working life, that's close to \$220,500.

If you calculate the future value of \$4,500 per year (yours & your employer's contribution) at a simple 5% (less than what the government pays on the money that it borrows), after 49 years of working you'd have \$892,919.98.

If you took out only 3% per year, you'd receive \$26,787.60 per year and it would last better than 30 years (until you're 95 if you retire at age 65) and that's with no interest paid on that final amount on deposit! If you bought an annuity and it paid 4% per year, you'd have a lifetime income of \$2,976.40 per month.

Entitlement my butt, I paid cash for my social security insurance!!!! Just because they borrowed the money, doesn't make my benefits some kind of charity or handout!!

Congressional benefits -- free healthcare, outrageous retirement packages, 67 paid holidays, three weeks paid vacation, unlimited paid sick days, now that's welfare, and they have the nerve to call my social security retirement entitlements?

We're "broke" and can't help our own Seniors, Veterans, Orphans, Homeless.

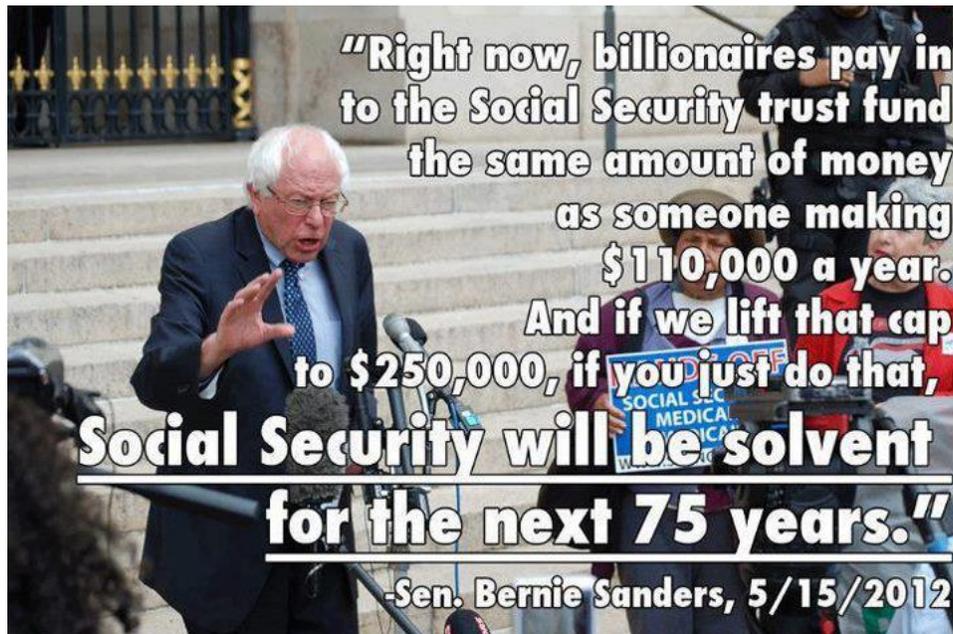
In the last months we have provided aid to Haiti , Chile , and Turkey. And now Pakistan...hideout of bin Laden. Literally, BILLIONS of DOLLARS!!!

Our retired seniors living on a 'fixed income' receive no aid nor do they get any breaks while our government and religious organizations pour Hundreds of Billions of \$\$\$\$\$'s and Tons of Food to Foreign Countries!

They call Social Security and Medicare an entitlement even though most of us have been paying for it all our working lives and now when it's time for us to collect, the government is running out of money. Why did the government borrow from it in the first place? Imagine if the GOVERNMENT gave 'US' the same support they give to other countries.

Sad isn't it? 99% of people won't have the guts to forward this. I'm one of the 1% -- I Just Did.

[20120813-13](#) 21:11 SteveG Quote: Sen. Bernie Sanders on Saving Social Security



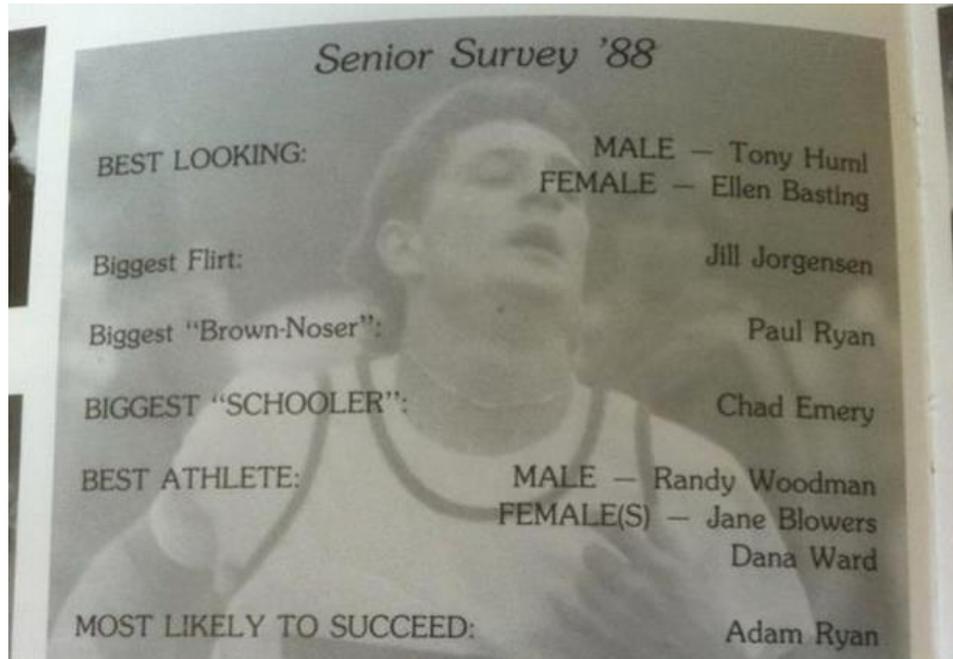
20120813-15

21:15

SteveG

Graphic: **Paul Ryan** — Voted '**Biggest Brown-Noser**' in His HS Class
[I guess some things never change! -SteveB]

Recognize any name...



20120813-16

21:26

SteveG

"Romney Declines to Say Where He Disagrees with Ryan on the Budget"

"Romney Declines to Say Where He Disagrees with Ryan on the Budget" by Holly Bailey, Yahoo! News

Aug. 13, 2012, (http://news.yahoo.com/blogs/ticket/romney-says-disagrees-ryan-budget-won-t-221403069.html?_esi=1)

(MIAMI) Mitt Romney rejected Democratic claims that Paul Ryan's congressional budget proposal is "radical and extreme," but declined to say exactly where he disagrees with his vice presidential running mate's fiscal policies, even as he suggested policy differences do exist.

Speaking to reporters on the tarmac outside his campaign plane at the airport here, Romney repeatedly declined to get into the specifics of where he and Ryan differ on federal budget proposals. Asked specifically to say where he disagrees with Ryan, Romney twice dodged the question.

"I'm sure there are places that my budget is different than his, but we're on the same page... We want to get America on track to a balanced budget," Romney said.

The presumptive Republican nominee said he and his potential VP agree that President Barack Obama's health care reform plan should be repealed as well as about efforts to cut federal spending. He also said he and Ryan both oppose efforts to cut Medicare for current recipients. But asked again to outline the differences he hinted at in their budget proposals, Romney didn't say.

"There may be," Romney said. "We'll take a look at the differences."

"The items that we agree on, I think, outweigh any differences there may be," Romney added. "We haven't gone through piece by piece, and said, 'Oh, here's a place where there's a difference. I can't imagine any two people even in the same party who have exactly all the same positions on all issues.'"

Speaking specifically about Medicare—an issue that could put Romney's efforts to win voters here at risk—Romney said his plan is similar to Ryan's—and insisted current and near retirees wouldn't be impacted. But he said it was crucial to undertake entitlement reform so the country could deliver on "promises" it has made to future generations.

"The truth is we simply cannot simply continue to pretend like a Medicare on track to go bankrupt at some point is acceptable. We must take action to make sure that we can save Medicare for coming generations," Romney said. "And this president's been in office for three-and-a-half years and hasn't been willing to make any proposals to make sure and save Medicare other than to put in place an unelected board which will tell people what kind of treatments they can have."

Romney insisted that when Americans hear what he's proposing, they would come around.

"The people of America will get a chance to hear those things, and I believe that when they understand the truth, they are going to take action that is in the best interest of the American people."

At the top of his remarks, Romney offered his "thoughts and prayers" to those affected by the shooting at Texas A&M University and said there has be "consideration" of how to prevent tragedies like it and the other recent shootings across the country. But Romney again insisted new gun control laws are not the answer.

"We've now had apparently from the early reports three of these tragedies in a row, and I happen to believe that this is not a matter of the weapon that is used, it's a matter of the individuals and the choices these people make," Romney said. "We have to understand how to prevent those kinds of choices from being made. I don't think gun laws are the answer, but I do believe that this is a topic that needs to be considered."

20120813-19 23:20 SteveG Cartoon: Paul Ryan: Devil or Boy Scout?

"Boy Scout Paul Ryan" by Gary Varvel, *Indianapolis Star*

Aug. 13, 2012, (<http://blogs.indystar.com/varvelblog/2012/08/13/boy-scout-paul-ryan/>)

Romney's Veep is being portrayed as a devil and a boy scout.



VERY INTERESTING ARTICLE SHINING A BIG SPOTLIGHT ON THE FAMOUS REPUBLICAN HYPOCRISY!

"Paul Ryan's Voting Record: Big-Spending Conservatism" by Andrew Restuccia and Seung Min Kim, Politico

Aug. 13, 2012, (<http://www.politico.com/news/stories/0812/79688.html?hp=f2>)

Paul Ryan rose to the top of the political ranks on his reputation as a conservative budget hawk. But his voting record shows him to be far from a pure fiscal conservative.

Ryan voted for the \$700 billion bank bailout, the biggest Medicare expansion in U.S. history, a massive highway bill that included the "Bridge to Nowhere" and other big-ticket priorities when George W. Bush was president — going to bat for a high-spending GOP agenda that the tea party base now looks on with regret.

"Obviously, those votes certainly don't make me happy," said Amy Kremer, chairwoman of the Tea Party Express, one of the country's most influential tea party organizations — though she was quick to say she was pleased with Ryan's selection as Mitt Romney's running mate.

"I think that he's somebody who'll stand up and accept responsibility for previous actions," she said. "More importantly than that, he knows that we're in serious financial trouble, and he has a grasp on the big picture all the way down to the little details.

"There is no perfect politician," Kremer added. "There are many of them that have had votes that we aren't happy about. But we were in a different time period then, and those votes are actually what led to this movement being formed."

A campaign spokesman for Ryan did not respond to a request for comment Monday.

Still, Ryan's voting record shows that he was willing to vote for expensive government programs when some other fiscal conservative said no.

In the fall of 2008, Ryan voted for TARP. Later that year, he voted for loans to help rescue the auto industry, making him one of just 32 Republicans to do so — and his vote came after Romney wrote The New York Times op-ed titled "Let Detroit go bankrupt."

Even so, critics of that kind of spending joined other conservatives in applauding Romney's announcement Saturday that Ryan would be on the ticket.

"His record speaks for itself, and he's going to have to defend those votes," said Club for Growth President Chris Chocola. "But when it comes to entitlement reform and unfunded liabilities, he probably understands and articulates it better than anyone else in the country."

Ryan's votes on spending came on top of his support for the Bush-era tax cuts, which liberals complain blew a titanic hole in the budget.

All in all, Ryan's congressional voting record reveals a standard, loyal Republican. He has voted at least 90 percent of the time with his party since he came to Capitol Hill in 1999, according to The Washington Post's votes database.

Among the biggest items in Ryan's spending record was his vote in the fall of 2008 for the \$700 billion TARP financial bailout, which drew resistance from many House Republicans despite the Bush administration's warnings that failing to act could cause an all-out collapse of the financial system.

During House floor debate on Sept. 29, 2008, Ryan said the TARP legislation "offends my principles." But he added, "I'm going to vote for this bill in order to preserve my principles. In order to preserve this free enterprise system."

Calling the vote a “Herbert Hoover moment,” Ryan added: “Just maybe this will work. And so for me and for my own conscience, so I can look myself in the mirror tonight and so I can go to sleep with a clear conscience, I want to know that I did everything I could to stop it from getting worse.”

Despite such dire warnings, fiscal hard-liners such as Rep. Jeff Flake (R-Ariz.), Rep. Mike Pence (R-Ind.) and Sen. Jim DeMint (R-S.C.) still voted no on the bailout.

“It was fundamentally wrong for Congress to take \$700 billion in bad decisions on Wall Street and transfer that to Main Street in the form of TARP,” Pence said more than a year later.

In 2003, Ryan also voted to create the Medicare prescription drug benefit, with a cost — initially estimated at \$400 billion over a decade, according to the Los Angeles Times — that so rankled conservatives that House Republican leaders had to take extraordinary efforts to pass the legislation by a razor-thin majority. That included holding the vote open for hours in the wee hours of the morning.

And during a time when pork-laden highway bills were en vogue among the Capitol Hill GOP, Ryan backed the 2005 transportation legislation that included a litany of earmarks, including for the notorious “Bridge to Nowhere” in Alaska. Though the vast majority of the House supported the bill, a handful of anti-earmark hardliners such as Flake and current Speaker John Boehner rejected it.

On Dec. 10, 2008, during the last days of the Bush administration, Ryan was one of just 32 Republicans to vote for legislation that would have provided \$14 billion in loans for the industry, citing the potential for layoffs in his district.

“It is clear that the mounting hardships throughout Southern Wisconsin have been downright gut-wrenching,” Ryan said in a statement issued after the vote. He has also said he voted for the package to ensure that the auto industry wouldn’t receive money from the main bank bailout.

But the House bill went nowhere in the Senate. President Barack Obama ultimately used money from TARP to help bail out the auto industry.

Ryan, like many Republicans, also voted to raise the debt limit at least five times during the Bush administration, when such votes were considered routine and uncontroversial.

Even at the time, much of the GOP-backed spending was unpopular with fiscal conservatives who feared their party was veering big time from its small-government message.

“How do we convince the voters in the midterm elections that two more years of Republican control will produce anything more than bigger government and growing deficits?” Flake lamented in a *Wall Street Journal* op-ed in September 2005, little more than a year before voters threw Congress back to the Democrats.

The *Journal’s* John Fund later quoted Sen. Tom Coburn (R-Okla.) as calling the prescription drug vote “a watershed event, the moment when Republicans who stood for limited government realized they were the enemy of their own leadership.”

Ryan has become one of the most influential voices — if not the top voice — in the Republican Party on fiscal matters. And his voting history largely reflects that.

Along with most House Republicans, Ryan voted in July 2011 in favor of the so-called Cut, Cap and Balance Act — the method favored by conservatives to raise the debt ceiling while reining in future spending. It included more than \$110 billion in budget cuts in fiscal 2012, would have capped federal spending at 18 percent of the nation’s GDP and would have required that the House and Senate pass a balanced-budget amendment to the Constitution that imposed a stricter threshold for raising taxes. Later that year, when the House voted on a stand-alone balanced budget amendment, Ryan was just one of four House Republicans to vote “no,” telling POLITICO at the time that the measure didn’t go far enough to halt future tax increases.

And of course, his proposal to overhaul Medicare has become the Republican conservative template for addressing the nation's huge spending on entitlements.

The Club for Growth says Ryan doesn't rank among the most conservative lawmakers on the Hill — he has earned just an 88 percent conservative lifetime rating on the organization's congressional scorecard.

And the organization criticized the Ryan budget earlier this year — calling the plan a “disappointment for fiscal conservatives” because it did not balance the budget quickly enough and it waived the sequester, a set of automatic cuts required under the Budget Control Act.

Still, Chocola credits Ryan with shifting the House GOP toward the House Budget Committee chairman's vision of a significant Medicare overhaul.

“I was in the House with him, and the Republican majority [at the time] would not have voted for his budget,” Chocola said in an interview. “The fact that he's moved the conference in the direction of voting for meaningful entitlement reform is a big deal.”

And Ryan didn't necessarily go all-in on TARP: On Jan. 14, 2009 — less than a week before Obama's inauguration — Ryan voted to prevent the remaining bailout funds from being released, saying he feared that “the second \$350 billion in TARP funding will go far beyond the original mission of preserving overall financial market stability, and instead will be used to fund a heavy-handed, neo-industrial policy.”

“Various industries have already marshaled their lobbyists for a claim on these public dollars,” he said. “And with our federal budget expected to reach historic levels this year, we cannot risk more public funds to be squandered.”

Though much of his policy profile in Congress has been dedicated to fiscal issues, Ryan has also consistently shown his social conservative bona fides in his nearly 14 years on Capitol Hill.

In 2006, Ryan joined nearly all fellow House Republicans to vote for a constitutional amendment that would define marriage as solely between a man and a woman. Ryan also voted to defund Planned Parenthood and has earned a 100 percent vote rating from the anti-abortion group National Right to Life.

Ryan, in 2005, also voted in favor of the so-called Palm Sunday Compromise that allowed federal courts to intervene in the case of Terri Schiavo, a move meant to save the life of the brain-damaged Florida woman whose family had fought to keep her alive.

Still, Ryan in November 2007 joined the vast majority of Democrats to support the Employment Non-Discrimination Act, which would outlaw workplace discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation. Ryan was one of 35 House Republicans to vote in favor of that bill.



President Obama should go on TV and ask people not to eat yellow snow if only for the joy of hearing Fox News explain how good yellow snow really is.

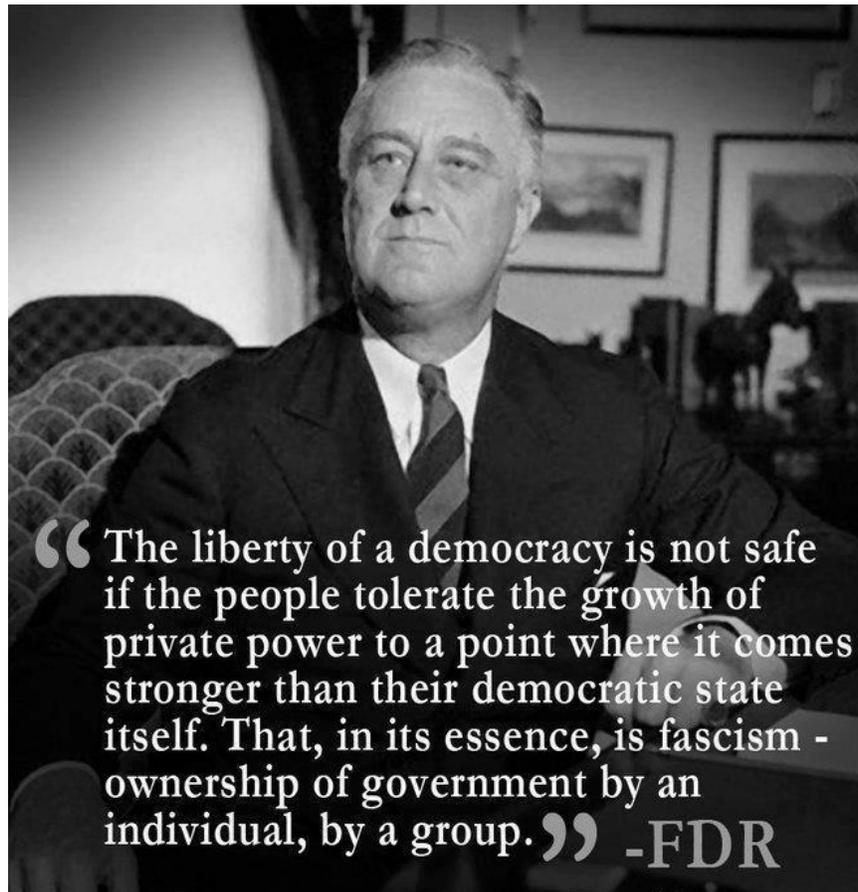
Ever wonder why Dirty Energy gets \$11 Billion in annual subsidies, while clean energy gets jack shit?

\$ \$ \$ \$ \$ \$ \$ \$ \$

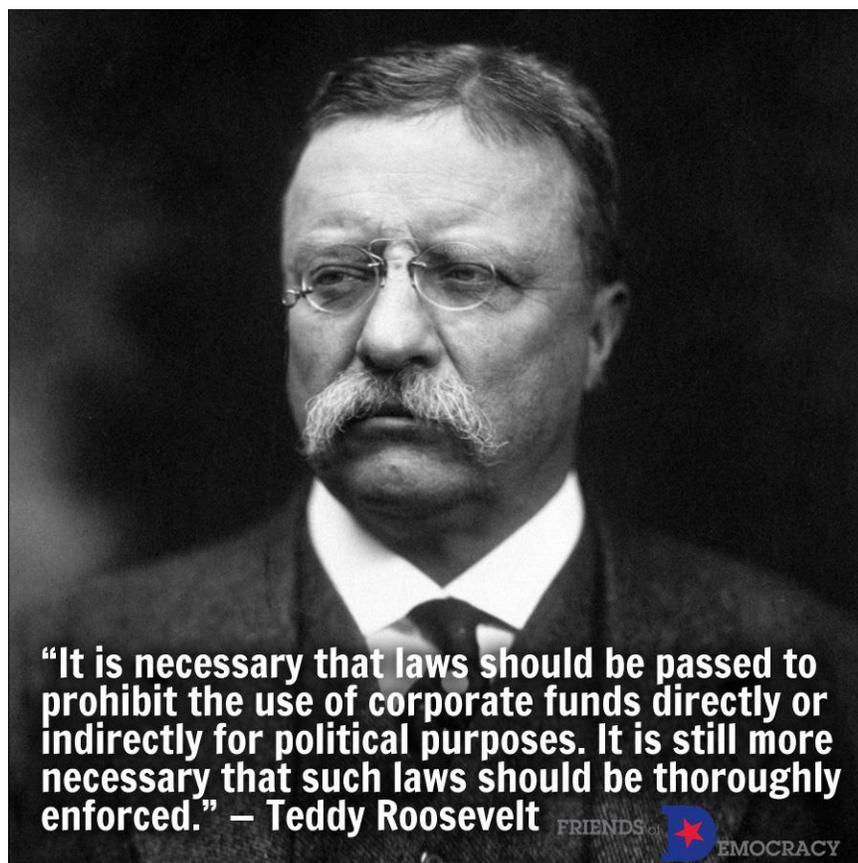
COULD IT BE THAT GREEN ENERGY IS OUTSPENT BY DIRTY MONEY BY 8:1?

Source: United Republic

FRIENDS OF DEMOCRACY



“ The liberty of a democracy is not safe if the people tolerate the growth of private power to a point where it comes stronger than their democratic state itself. That, in its essence, is fascism - ownership of government by an individual, by a group. ” -FDR



“It is necessary that laws should be passed to prohibit the use of corporate funds directly or indirectly for political purposes. It is still more necessary that such laws should be thoroughly enforced.” – Teddy Roosevelt

FRIENDS OF  DEMOCRACY

Please pass along. Help defend against the destruction of a once great country.

[Source of original email unknown. –SteveB]



August 11th, 2012

FREEDOM PUSH

(Local, National)

**DEFEND FREEDOM
DEFEAT OBAMA
VOTE NOV. 6TH, 2012**

*The democracy will
cease to exist when you
take away from those
who are willing to work
and give to those who
would not.*

Thomas Jefferson

Had enough of our Country
being led and destroyed
by Chicago politicians,
cronyism, liberal "leftists"
and a justice department
with very questionable
standards?

The opportunity to take
America back will come
this Nov. 6th
BE THERE!

VOTE THEM ALL OUT!

- America 2012, after only 3+ years, under Socialist Barack Hussein Obama.
 - ✓ The division of America at every level, led by Socialist Obama.
 - ✓ Established path by the current administration to add \$1 trillion per year in national debt.
 - ✓ You now work until June 18th every year just to pay federal, state and local taxes.
 - ✓ Every man, woman and child currently are responsible for \$50,800 of national debt.
 - ✓ Every taxpayer is responsible for \$139,900 of national debt.
 - ✓ 223,000 small businesses gone bust.
 - ✓ The addition of 13,000 pages to the tax laws just to support Obamacare.
 - ✓ The addition of 60,000 IRS agents to police Obamacare.
 - ✓ One in seven Americans now on food stamps.
 - ✓ Government intrusion into every facet of American lives.
 - ✓ Accelerated effort by Government to eradicate Christianity.
 - ✓ The fostering of a justice department, who answers to no one.
 - "Fast and Furious" cover up by the justice department.
 - Black Panther voter intimidation ignored by the justice department.
 - ✓ The squandering of billions of tax payer dollars to support "green energy" projects, gone bust.
 - ✓ 1200+ days without a budget from the Democratic (Liberal "left") led U.S. Senate.
 - ✓ 2013 will bring the single largest personal tax increases in the history of our Country.
 - ✓ An administration excelling in deceit, lies, cover-ups, cronyism and corruption.
 - ✓ Suing states on a daily basis in order to support the "Liberal left" Socialist agenda.
 - ✓ Union cronyism at an all time high.
 - NY State's Green Jobs Green New York: \$113 million taxpayer dollars paid to union workers just to stay busy.
 - GM government buy-out: Union workers and retirees receive a pension top-off, while 20,000 salaried employees are ignored. GM stills owes taxpayers \$27 billion.
 - ✓ An economic plan consisting of borrowing, taxing and spending.

Socialist Obama's plan for the next four years?.....MUCH MORE OF THE SAME!

Can we survive another term in office by Socialist Obama and Liberal "leftist" Washington politicians?
Start now to search for yourself , and prepare to vote November 6th, 2012 and....

VOTE THEM ALL OUT!

[20120813-20](#) 23:48 SteveB Re: FREEDOM PUSH, Aug. 11. (reply to SteveM, above)

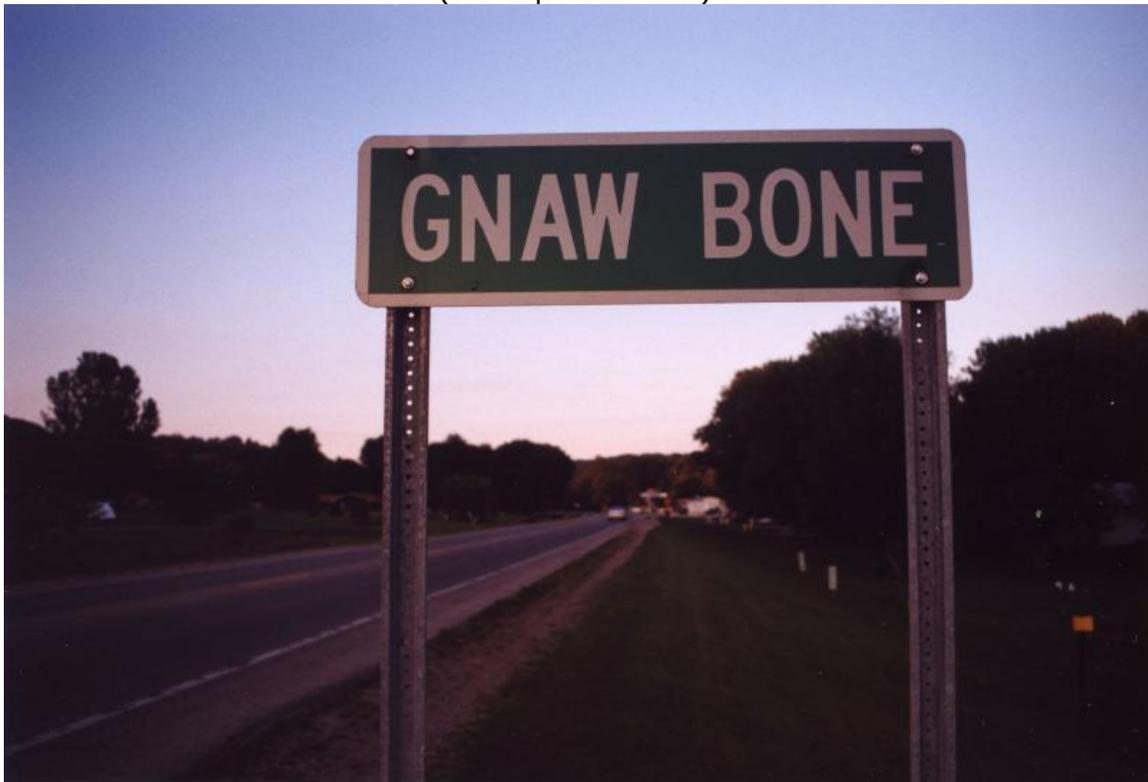
Funny, you didn't mind 8 years of the same thing and worse under W.

Funny, it's all the President's fault, while your Clown House is blameless.

[20120813-22](#) 23:59 SteveB Photo: Gnaw Bone, Indiana

<http://www.in.gov/visitindiana/blog/index.php/2012/01/26/the-original-gnaw-bone-tenderloin-super46/>

(Christopher Wheeler)



The Original 'Gnaw Bone Tenderloin'



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

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FRIENDS OF THE MIDDLE NEWSLETTER #204 — AUG. 15, 2012

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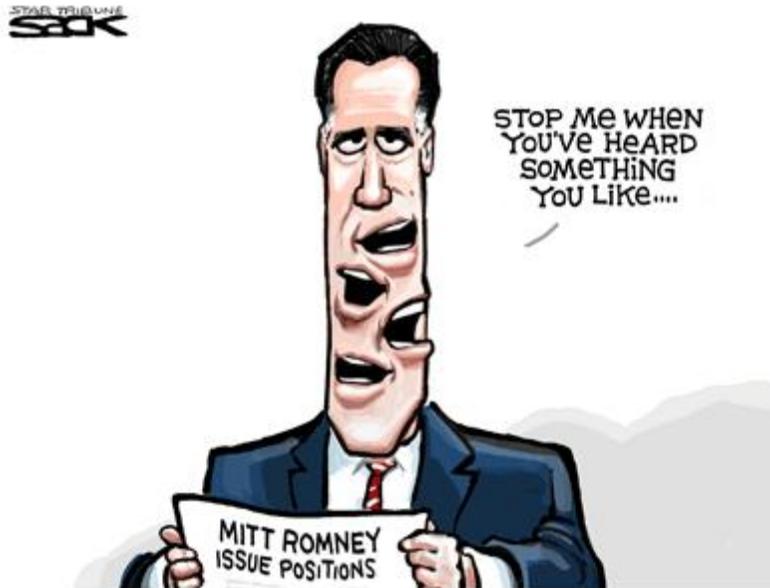
INDEX: Click here.

America Doesn't Like Mitt R0mney

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

The problem for the Republicans is that Americans always elect a President that they like more than they dislike. Even a "disliked" VP candidate, like Sarah Palin, can drag a "liked" Presidential candidate to defeat. And the fact is that, ever since Mitt R0mney came upon the national political stage years ago, his approval ratings have never risen above his disapproval ratings in national polls. I wonder what kind of shapeshifting strategy the campaign will employ to try to solve this major catastrophe.

What if likability were to trump lies? What a sweet world that would be!



"Why America Doesn't Like Mitt Romney" by L.Z. Granderson, CNN

Aug. 14, 2012, (http://edition.cnn.com/2012/08/14/opinion/granderson-romney-likeability/index.html?hpt=hp_c2)

It can't be because he's rich, because there are a lot of rich people we like. Hell, President Obama's rich and 56% of the country views him favorably.

It can't be because he's Republican, because Republicans don't like him either. Last month, when a woman reportedly asked House Speaker John Boehner, "Can you make me love Mitt Romney?" he said, "No...the American people probably aren't going to fall in love with Mitt Romney."

The latest CNN/ORC International Poll found that 48% of Americans view him unfavorably, which isn't exactly breaking news because Romney's been unable to get much likeability traction since announcing his first run at the White House five years ago. For a sex scandal-free politician, that's got to be a bit perplexing.

But then last week, the reason for the bad vibes about Romney became clear. You see, he's been zipping across the country using President Obama's "You didn't build that" quote out of context for an analogy about a student who worked hard in school and made the honor roll. He used it again when he introduced his running mate, Paul Ryan last weekend.

What the president said was:

If you were successful, somebody along the line gave you some help. There was a great teacher somewhere in your life. Somebody helped to create this unbelievable American system that we have that allowed you to thrive. Somebody invested in roads and bridges. If you've got a business — you didn't build that." He also said, "The point is, is that when we succeed, we succeed because of our individual initiative, but also because we do things together.

Romney spins it to make it sound as if the president is totally discrediting an individual's hard work, summing it up this way.

"I realize that he got to school on a bus and the bus driver got him there, but I don't give the bus driver credit for the honor roll," he said. "I give the kid credit for the honor roll."

Nothing's wrong with that statement by itself.

The problem is, we don't live by ourselves.

This analogy epitomizes what makes Romney so unlikeable to so many people, regardless of party, race, gender or socioeconomic status.

In his mind, the world is full of bus drivers and honor roll students and the two are independent of each other, which is why he can characterize President Obama's desire to help those less fortunate as creating a "culture of dependence." What rubs so many people the wrong way is Romney's inability to see that society is interdependent.

There are moments in some of Romney's speeches in which he comes across like the guy who doesn't wave when you let him into traffic, because in his mind, he was able to merge on his own.

Few people ever like that guy ... and this is why less than 50% of Americans like Romney.

Growing up, I rode the bus to school.

We only had one car and both my parents had to work. So if it wasn't for the bus I would have had to attend the neighborhood schools that were within walking distance as opposed to the special schools for high academic achievers that were an hour's ride away.

I worked hard to get accepted into the programs. I worked to stay there. But I would not have been able to do any of those things if it weren't for the bus drivers who made sure I got to school safe and on time.

When you genuinely live life through a prism of gratitude, you don't use analogies that minimize the impact others have on your life. When you live life through that prism, you don't see voters and delegates, you don't see the budget as just a bunch of numbers you have to make work.

You see the lives.

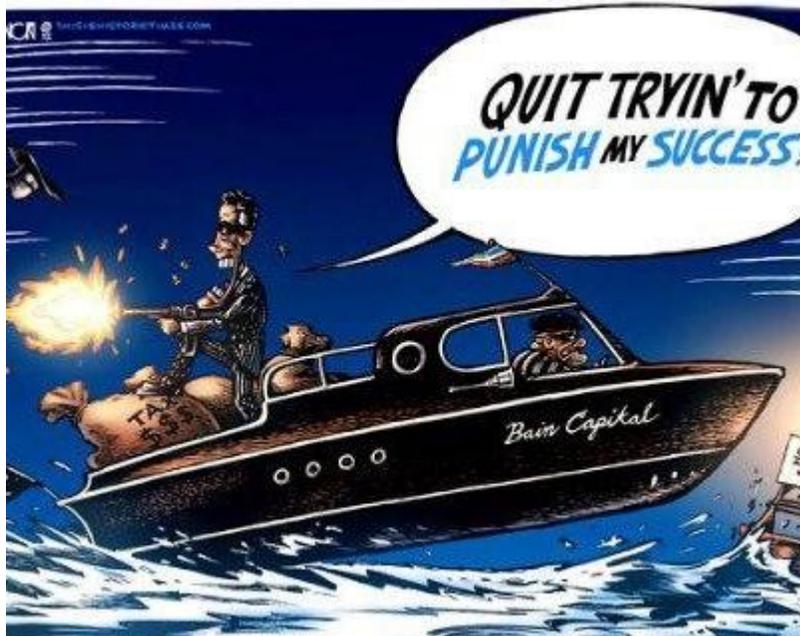
Romney doesn't irk us because he was born into privilege. He irks us because he behaves as if being born into privilege had nothing to do with his success. His wife, Ann, was supposed to make her husband more appealing. It didn't work. Now the question is: Can Paul Ryan make Mitt likeable?

I doubt it.

When men like Ryan or Obama or Vice President Joe Biden roll their sleeves up to talk to blue collar voters, it feels real because it's coming from a real place inside.

When Romney rolls his sleeves up, it's clear he's trying to send a message -- because his sense of entitlement and social disconnect prevents him from being the message.

That doesn't mean people won't vote for him in November. It's just that they won't be doing so because they like him.



20120814-01 10:02 Art

"An Open Letter to the People Who Hate Obama More Than They Love America"

I kind of think of myself as pretty much middle road. Over the years I've voted for both parties and nominally called myself a Republican because I am pretty conservative. These past few years, however, as I have more time to look at things, I have not been very impressed with the logic from the right, especially the extreme right which seems to more and more dominate the Republican Party. Frankly I don't like extremes in either direction.

The below is a bit strong, but I think it just may well capture the sentiment today. Someone please tell me this is not true.

"An Open Letter to the People Who Hate Obama More Than They Love America" by MinistryOfTruth, Daily Kos

Jan. 9, 2012, (<http://www.dailykos.com/story/2012/01/09/1053088/-An-open-letter-to-the-people-who-hate-Obama-more-than-they-love-America>)

I meet you all the time. You hate Obama. You hate gay people. You hate black people, immigrants, Muslims, labor unions, women who want the right to make choices concerning their bodies, you hate em all. You hate being called racist. You hate being called a bigot. Maybe if you talked about creating jobs more than you talk about why you hate gay people we wouldn't call you bigots. Maybe if you talked about black people without automatically assuming they are on food stamps while demanding their birth certificates we wouldn't call you racist. You hate socialism and social justice. You hate regulations and taxes and spending and the Government. You hate.

You like war. You like torture. You like Jesus. I don't know how in the hell any of that is compatible, but no one ever accused you haters of being over-committed to ideological consistency. You like people who look like you or at least hate most of the things that you hate. You hate everything else.

Now, I know you profess to love our country and the founding fathers (unless you are reminded that they believed in the separation of church and state), but I need to remind you that America is NOT what Fox News says it is. America is a melting pot, it always has been. We are a multi-cultural amalgamation of all kinds of people, and yet you still demonize everyone who is not a rich, white, heterosexual Christian male or his submissive and obedient wife.

You hate liberals, moderates, hell, anyone who disagrees with Conservative dogma as espoused by Fox News and Rush Limbaugh. You hate em.

Well, here are the facts, Jack. If you hate the Government then you are unqualified to manage it. If you hate gay people more than you love America than you should take your own advice and get the hell out. There are several countries that are openly hostile to gay people, but they are full of brown people and you don't like them much either from what I understand. It looks like you are screwed, but that's not what I am here to tell you.

Now that you have thrown everything and the kitchen sink at President Obama and it still hasn't worked you are panicking. Obama's approval ratings are still near 50% despite your best efforts to undermine the economy and America's recovery at every step you can. You tried to hold the American economy hostage to force America into default on its' debts, debts that YOU rang up under Bush, so you could blame it on Obama and it failed. You've used the filibuster more than any other Congress ever, going so far as to vote against providing health care access to 9/11 first responders. You remember 9/11, don't you, it's that thing you used to lie us into a war in Iraq, and then when Obama killed Bin Laden and ended the war in Iraq you told people that he hates America and wants the troops to fail. You monsters. You hate Obama with a passion, despite the fact that he is a tax cutting, deficit reducing war President who undermines civil rights and delivers corporate friendly watered down reforms that benefit special interests just like a Republican. You call him a Kenyan. You call him a socialist. You dance with your hatred singing it proudly in the rain like it was a 1950s musical.

Frankly, you disgust me. Your hatred nauseates me. Your bigotry offends me. Your racism revolts me.

Dear haters, I am openly questioning your patriotism.

I think you hate gays, Obama, black people, poor people, all of us, women, atheists and agnostics, Latinos, Muslims, Liberals, all of us, I think you hate everyone who isn't exactly like you, and I think you hate us more than you love your country.

I think you hate gay soldiers more than you want America to win its wars.

I don't even think you want America to win wars, you just want America to have wars, never ending wars and the war profiteering it generates. You love that kind of spending, you love spending on faith based initiatives and abstinence based sex education (George Carlin would have loved that one), you love spending on subsidies for profitable oil corporations, you spend like drunken sailors when you are in the White House, but if it is a Democrat then suddenly you cheer when America doesn't get the Olympics because it might make the black President look bad. But oohh you love your country, you say, and you want it back. Well listen here, Skippy, it isn't your country, you don't own it, it is our country, and America is NOT the religiously extremist Foxbots who hate science, elitist professors and having a vibrant and meaningful sex life with someone we love if Rick Santorum doesn't approve of it. Rick Santorum isn't running for America's f*cking high school dance chaperone, he should probably just shut the hell up about sex, but he can't because he has nothing else to run on.

Republicans can NOT win on the issues. They've got NOTHING. All they have is a divide and conquer class war that pits ignorant racist and bigoted people against the rest of us in a meaningless battle of wedge issues and the already proven to fail George W. Bush agenda again of tax cuts for the rich, deregulation, privatization and war profiteering and nothing else, so all they can do is blame black people, gays, the government, anybody and everyone else for their own failings. The party of personal responsibility, my a*s.

But they love multi-national corporations, just ask a gay hating and racist religious extremist if they think Corporations are people and they will gladly agree, but if you ask them if gay people are people they aren't so sure.

Dear haters, you are the cruel, heartless misinformed assholes who would sell America out to Halliburton in a heartbeat, you would rather pay ZERO taxes than you would see a newly born baby get access to quality health care, you cheer when we discuss denying health care to young people with preventable diseases, and you boo when we discuss the First Lady's plan to cut back on childhood obesity. You are a cross to carry and a flag to wrap yourself in away from being the people who Sinclair Lewis warned us about, but I guarantee that if Fox News told you to dress that way you would, because you are the same blind, ignorant and closed minded dunces who drove this country into a civil war years ago because you are bound to the notion that some men are more equal than others. In short, the reason I proudly wear my union army hat is because of seditious sell outs like you who constantly f*ck over working class Americans so a foreign entrepreneur like Rupert Murdoch can get a bigger tax break. If corporations are people, they are neither American patriots nor capable of love. Just like you.

So stop wearing your hate with pride. Stop celebrating your anti-science, anti-math ignorance. Stop using code words to mask your bigotry like "family values", especially when you hate my family and when you stand on the same stage as a guy who has had three marriages or if you share a seat in the Senate with a guy who cheated on his wife with hookers while wearing diapers. You should be ashamed. I know that you are just doing this to motivate your misinformed hate cult base because if they actually knew that your ideas will make them poorer than they are now, they would never vote for you. You are doing your best to impoverish your countrymen so rich people can get bigger tax breaks and you can keep on delivering corporate welfare to the special interests who have bribed you, and I am disgusted by the way you gleefully parade your hatred with aplomb. I don't think you do love America. At least, not as much as you hate everyone in America who isn't exactly like you.

You should think about that, and maybe get some help.

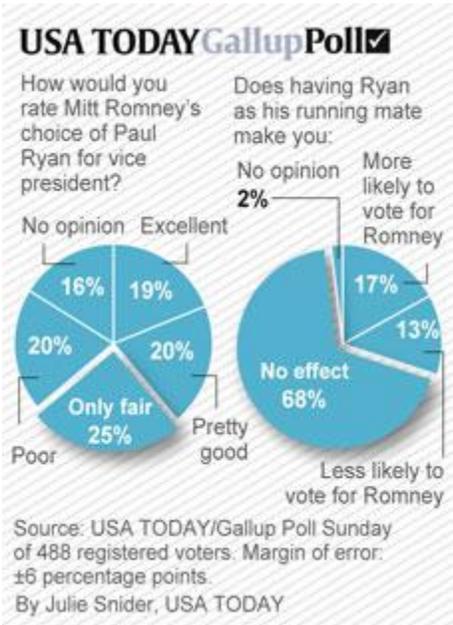
And for the record, I do not hate you. I am embarrassed by you and nauseated by your cruel and thoughtless behavior and your all consuming greed, but I do not hate you. I forgive you and I hope you can change someday, but I don't hate you. You have enough hate in you for the rest of us as it is.

"Ryan Scores Lowest Poll Numbers Since Quayle" by Susan Page and Catalina Camia, *USA Today*

Aug. 14, 2012, (<http://www.usatoday.com/news/politics/story/2012-08-13/ryan-romney-poll/57038326/1>)

(WASHINGTON) Wisconsin Rep. Paul Ryan scores the lowest initial ratings from Americans of any vice presidential pick since the controversial choice of Dan Quayle nearly a quarter-century ago, a weekend *USA Today*/Gallup Poll finds.

In a nationwide survey taken Sunday, 39% of registered voters call Republican contender Mitt Romney's selection of Ryan "excellent" or "pretty good" while 45% rate it as "only fair" or "poor." Sixteen percent have no opinion. That's the most tepid reception for a running mate since 1988, when then-vice president George H.W. Bush picked Quayle, an Indiana senator who immediately ran into questions about his draft history during the Vietnam War and whether he was prepared for the presidency.



In comparison, John McCain's surprise choice of then-Alaska governor Sarah Palin four years ago was rated as excellent or good by 46%, fair or poor by 37%.

Still, Ryan's addition to his ticket has galvanized Romney's support in the GOP: 31% of Republicans say they are more likely to vote for the former Massachusetts governor as a result of his running mate. That's comparable to the 30% in the GOP who said the same of McCain's choice of Palin and more than the 21% of registered Democrats in 2008 who said they were more likely to vote for Barack Obama because he picked Joe Biden.

Overall, 17% of those surveyed say Ryan makes them more likely to vote for the Republican ticket, 13% say he makes them less likely. In the past seven elections, only Dick Cheney in 2000 and Quayle in 1988 had lower proportional advantages when it came to the vice presidential candidate's impact on the vote.

Romney pollster Neil Newhouse says the findings reflect the fact that Ryan, a House member since 1999, isn't widely known. Ryan's impact on the race is similar to that scored by Biden four years ago, Newhouse says. Then, a Gallup survey found 14% more likely to vote for Obama as a result, 7% less likely.

In each recent election, however, an overwhelming majority of those surveyed said the running mate has no effect on their vote. That's true for 68% of Americans this year — underscoring the limited impact vice presidential contenders typically have on the outcome of presidential races.

Ryan isn't well-known. More than half of those surveyed, 53%, say they have never heard of him or don't know enough to have an opinion. Among those who do, 27% give him a favorable rating, 21% an unfavorable one. By 50%-31%, voters say Ryan is qualified to serve as president.

The survey of 488 registered voters has a margin of error of +/-6 percentage points. The results closely paralleled the findings of a USA TODAY/Gallup Poll of 1,006 adults, which has an error margin of +/-4 points.

[20120814-03](#) 10:29 SteveM Fw: They Want What???

WOW, if we did not pay our taxes they would come after us in a heartbeat & probably arrest us.

[Source of original email unknown. -SteveB]

Ever wonder if Tim Geithner has ever paid his back taxes? Geithner paid \$42,700+/- in a settlement for delinquent taxes.

As of Feb., 2012, 36 Obama staffers owed \$833,000 in taxes. 21 of these aides receive an annual salary of \$172,000. Salaries paid by the US Citizens and then they don't pay their "share" of taxes. More importantly, according to the IRS, federal employees owe the country more than \$3.4 BILLION in back taxes. These tax offenders include employees of the U S. Senate. These are the people that write the laws making the rest of us pay. Tim Geithner's Treasury Dept. has 1,181 employees with delinquent taxes totaling \$9.3 million. All of this was reported by CNN (I know, big surprise!)

Having said all of this, delinquent taxpayers for the rest of America is 5%, compared to the 3.3% of Federal Government workers. If they work for the government and owe taxes, fire them or garnishee their wages or just forget to pay them until they are paid up!

...and they want 12 years of Romney's tax returns????

[20120814-09](#) 13:23 SteveB Re: They Want What??? (reply to SteveM, above)

BUT, let's be fair, shall we?

This is an old story from January, so I assume a lot of these taxes have already been paid. Apparently, President Obama's staff is better than average and better than Bush's! (see below)

So what have you been made to cry about and bemoan? A big NOTHING! The President is actually the good guy in this story. That's the real truth. Can you handle it?

Have a nice day.

from (<http://www.politico.com/politico44/2012/01/white-house-staffers-owe-more-than-in-back-taxes-112412.html>)

Frank Provasek, Top Commenter, University of Texas at Arlington: Yes, about 2% of Obama's staffers owe back taxes. But to omit the fact that 3% of George Bush's 2008 staffers owed back taxes misleads the reader that this is an Obama problem when it is actually an IMPROVEMENT from the situation that existed under the previous president.

From (<http://economix.blogs.nytimes.com/2009/12/18/i-pay-your-salary-tax-deadbeat/>)

Over all, the 9.7 million federal workers included in the I.R.S. data had a delinquency rate of about 2.86 percent, but there was great variation across agencies and executive departments. The I.R.S. does not have comparable data for nationwide tax delinquency.

Sometimes, it gets a lot like swatting flies in here.

20120814-04	10:53	SteveB	Fw: CREDO Action Petition: Demand Medicare for All!
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from CREDO Action:

Paul Ryan vs. Medicare

By selecting Rep. Paul Ryan to be his running mate, Mitt Romney just made this election about Medicare.

Rep. Ryan was the principal architect of a budget proposal that Paul Krugman called both "ludicrous" and "cruel." And the linchpin of the Ryan budget was his plan to end Medicare.

Now that Ryan's plan to privatize Medicare is in the national spotlight, we need to make sure that the debate isn't just a point/counterpoint between the center right and the far right.

We need to ensure that a progressive vision is on the table to counter what right-wing extremists like Paul Ryan and Mitt Romney are proposing.

We shouldn't destroy Medicare, we should expand it so that it covers everybody.

Tell Democrats: Support Medicare for All. Click here to sign the petition:

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

The Ryan plan would replace Medicare with a voucher program for seniors, who'd be dumped into the private insurance market.¹

Over time the vouchers would lose value relative to the cost of health care. And the seniors who couldn't afford the cost of insurance even with the vouchers would be out of luck.

In addition, the Ryan proposal does nothing to actually control costs.

All it does is shift the cost of health care onto the backs of seniors. And, in fact, by forcing seniors into the inefficient private insurance market, it would actually drive up the cost of providing health care to them.

President Obama will surely (and rightly) criticize the Ryan plan to end Medicare.

But in terms of providing a positive vision for how our nation provides health care, President Obama will be stuck defending his signature health care law, which made some positive reforms without truly fixing our broken health care system.

The debate requires a forceful push for the policy that will actually end our nation's health care crisis. And that push must come from us.

Every other industrialized country in the world provides quality, universal health care at a fraction of the cost of the U.S. system.

Private insurance companies are a big part of our problem. And while President Obama's health care law will expand health care coverage to millions of Americans, it guarantees customers and profits for insurance companies that put profits before people.

These companies didn't want to compete with a "public option" for a reason — they want to maximize profits and minimize care.

Medicare, on the other hand, already covers 40 million Americans over the age of 65, providing quality care at prices that are much lower than the private market. It's also quite popular and unquestionably constitutional.

By staking out a progressive flank and generating a groundswell of public support for expanding Medicare so that it covers everybody, we can help prevent the debate from shifting further to the right.

Let's remember, when health care reform went through Congress, a single-payer system like Medicare for All wasn't even on the table.

In another example of Democrats preemptively caving to Republican obstructionists and their insurance company lobbyist friends, the starting position for the Democrats was a compromise in the form of a public health care option that might compete side-by-side with private insurance plans.

And then that compromise was compromised even further when the Democrats jettisoned the public option.

With Medicare sure to be one of the top issues in this election, we can't let the strongest voices be the Republicans who are working to defeat President Obama and the insurance companies that are looking to wring as much profit as they can from the rest of us.

If we do, we know how that will turn out.

America's health care system is in crisis, there's no more time for half-measures and unworkable compromises when we know Medicare already works.

Thank you for speaking out. —Matt Lockshin, Campaign Manager, CREDO Action from Working Assets

Footnote:

¹"Paul Ryan's Original Medicare Plan Ends Medicare, Period," Think Progress, 08-11-12.

Further reading:

A. "Michael Moore: Supreme Court Healthcare Ruling a Victory on the Path to Single Payer," Democracy Now!, 06-29-12.

B. "Bernie Sanders, Nurses: We Still Need 'Medicare for All'," *The Nation*, 06-28-12.

C. "Medicare for All: A Single Solution to the Health Care Fracas," *Yes! Magazine*, 06-29-12.

20120814-05	12:39	SteveB	"Whose Plan Destroys Medicare — Obama's or Romney-Ryan's?"
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"Whose Plan Destroys Medicare — Obama's or Romney-Ryan's?" by Robert Reich, NationofChange

Aug. 14, 2012, (<http://www.nationofchange.org/whose-plan-destroys-medicare-obama-s-or-romney-ryan-s-1344957549>)

Stumping in Florida today, Mitt Romney charged President Obama's Affordable Care Act will "cut more than \$700 billion" out of Medicare.

What Romney didn't say was that his running-mate's budget — approved by House Republicans and by Romney himself — would cut Medicare by the same amount. The big difference, though, is the Affordable Care Act achieves these savings by reducing Medicare payments to drug companies, hospitals, and other providers rather than cutting payments to Medicare beneficiaries.

The Romney-Ryan plan, by contrast, achieves its savings by turning Medicare into a voucher whose value doesn't keep up with expected increases in healthcare costs — thereby shifting the burden onto Medicare beneficiaries, who will have to pay an average of \$6,500 a year more for their Medicare insurance, according an analysis of the Republican plan by the non-partisan Congressional Budget Office.

Moreover, the Affordable Care Act uses its Medicare savings to help children and lower-income Americans afford health care, and to help seniors pay for prescription drugs by filling the so-called "donut hole" in Medicare Part D coverage.

The Romney-Ryan plan uses the savings to finance even bigger tax cuts for the very wealthy.

Spread the word. Don't allow the GOP to get away with this demagoguery.

20120814-06

12:49

SteveB

Fw: UltraViolet Action: Share the Facts About Paul Ryan's Record on Women's Issues!

from UltraViolet:

Everyone is talking about Paul Ryan, Mitt Romney's pick for Vice President. And most people are talking about his extreme plans to end Medicare and gut Social Security. **But what people don't realize is that his record on women is equally appalling--shocking even.**

We compiled a list--a horrifying list--of Paul Ryan's record on women's rights. These are five facts every single voter needs to know, right away. **Can you share this with your friends right now?**

Share it on Facebook:

<http://act.weareultraviolet.org/go/211?t=1&akid=155.359331.pzA5sJ>.

Not on Facebook? Share this with your friends from our website:

<http://act.weareultraviolet.org/go/205?t=2&akid=155.359331.pzA5sJ>.

Thanks for speaking out! —Nita, Shaunna and Kat, the UltraViolet Team

P.S. Victory Alert: Candy Crowley to Moderate a Presidential Debate. After more than 85,000 UltraViolet members signed a petition--that we delivered to the Presidential Debates Commission--they announced that for the first time in 20 years, a woman, CNN's Candy Crowley, will moderate an official presidential debate. Thanks so much for being a part of this important victory!

Sources:

1. "Paul Ryan Social Security Plan Calls for Private Accounts," Huffington Post, August 11, 2012, <http://act.weareultraviolet.org/go/206?t=4&akid=155.359331.pzA5sJ>.

2. "Paul Ryan: Just Plain Bad for Women," *Daily News*, August 13, 2012, <http://act.weareultraviolet.org/go/207?t=5&akid=155.359331.pzA5sJ>.

3. Statement on Mitt Romney's Selection As Rep. Paul Ryan for His Vice-Presidential Running Mate, NARAL Pro-Choice America, August 11, 2012, <http://act.weareultraviolet.org/go/208?t=6&akid=155.359331.pzA5sJ>.

4. "Paul Ryan's Extreme Abortion Views," The Daily Beast, August 11, 2012, <http://act.weareultraviolet.org/go/209?t=7&akid=155.359331.pzA5sJ>.

5. "The Ryan Reaction: This Election Is Now about 'Choice'," RH Reality Check, August 13, 2012, <http://act.weareultraviolet.org/go/210?t=9&akid=155.359331.pzA5sJ>.



PAUL RYAN & WOMEN

THE TOP FIVE FACTS YOU NEED TO KNOW & PROBABLY DON'T

- 1 HE VOTED AGAINST THE LILY LEDBETTER FAIR PAY ACT.**
Think women deserve to earn the same pay as men for the same work? Paul Ryan doesn't. And the pay gap costs women and their families close to \$431,000 over their lifetimes.
- 2 HE OPPOSES ABORTION EVEN IN CASES OF RAPE & INCEST.**
It's not just that Paul Ryan has voted 59 times against a woman's right to choose — which he has. He would even rather let a woman die than allow her to have an abortion. He's supported a bill to allow hospitals to refuse to provide abortion care to a woman, even if she could die without it.
- 3 HE *REALLY* WANTS TO GET RID OF PLANNED PARENTHOOD.**
Rep. Ryan has repeatedly voted to defund Planned Parenthood, which would leave millions of women without access to comprehensive reproductive health care and preventative services.
- 4 HE WOULD CRIMINALIZE SOME FORMS OF BIRTH CONTROL.**
Happy about free birth control? Rep. Ryan sure isn't. Not only is he adamantly opposed to the health care law's requirement that insurance companies cover birth control, he actually supports legislation that would outlaw some forms of birth control.
- 5 ALSO, HE'D OUTLAW IN VITRO FERTILIZATION — SERIOUSLY.**
That same bill that outlaws some forms of birth control could also make in vitro fertilization illegal. Can't have kids naturally? Too bad.

CONCERNED? Share this now. 

For sources and citations see <http://act.weareultraviolet.org/signup/paulryan/>

20120814-11	13:53	SteveB	Fw: USAction Petition: Tell R0mney-Ryan to Say No to Privatizing Social Security!
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from USAction:

The Romney Ryan plan will stop the heart of Social Security

Today is Social Security's 77th birthday. But with Mitt Romney's announcement of Paul Ryan as his Vice Presidential pick, the promise of Social Security is under threat now more than ever.

Romney/Ryan would gut Social Security and Medicare to pay for trillions in tax giveaways to the top 2%. Under Ryan's budget, Mitt Romney would have paid a .82% tax rate.

In Congress, Ryan pushed an even more radical version of President Bush's Social Security privatization plan that even the Bush administration called "irresponsible." Why? Because he wants to turn Social Security's guaranteed benefit into private retirement accounts — putting our seniors' futures at risk, while handing Wall Street a massive payday.

The heart of Social Security is the guarantee that no senior will be left alone and poor after a lifetime of work. But Paul Ryan is the leading architect of a Republican budget that would strip away that guarantee — leaving millions of seniors on their own and at the mercy of Wall Street.

It's a shot at the very heart of what Social Security is all about. But to Paul Ryan? He thinks Social Security is nothing but a "Ponzi scheme." This, despite the fact that by his own account, he used Social Security survivor benefits to pay his way through college.

Will you sign our petition demanding Mitt Romney protect the promise we made to our seniors by saying no to Paul Ryan's plan to privatize Social Security? We'll deliver your signatures to the Republican National Convention in Florida at the end of the month.

http://act.truemajorityaction.org/p/salsa/web/common/public/content?content_item_KEY=8788

Paul Ryan may claim he's a "deficit hawk," but his famed Ryan budget would do nothing to decrease the deficit. In fact, if implemented, Ryan's plan would increase the deficit to more than \$22 trillion by 2022!

What Ryan's plan would really do is gut vital programs millions of Americans rely on to get by. It's so devastating to the poor and middle class, he received a rebuke from the nation's Catholic Bishops. He wants to privatize Medicare, Medicaid and food stamps, and wants to effectively eliminate all other programs that help the middle class.

Meanwhile, Ryan's plan would support unrestricted military spending and \$5 trillion in new tax cuts for the ultra-rich. And that's not including his plans to renew the Bush tax cuts for the top 2% as well as eliminating capital gains taxes all together. By Mitt Romney's own admission, under Ryan's plan, he and the rest of the top 1% would pay practically zero in taxes. That's right, ZERO. As if the ultra-rich aren't already getting away with not paying their fair share.

This issue is too big to ignore. Social Security provides vital retirement, disability, survivorship and death benefits. It's America's most effective poverty reduction program. But not if Paul Ryan gets his hands on it.

Paul Ryan is an extremist with an even more extreme agenda. And Mitt Romney's decision to pick him as his running mate speaks volumes. So sign our petition demanding Mitt Romney protect the promise we made to our seniors by saying no to Paul Ryan's plan to privatize Social Security, and we'll deliver it to the Republican National Convention in Florida later this month.

Sincerely, David Elliot, USAction / TrueMajority

20120814-07	12:56	Tom	"Hexagon Spy Satellite Rescue Declassified: CIA Releases Details Of Deep-Sea Rescue"
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"Hexagon Spy Satellite Rescue Declassified: CIA Releases Details Of Deep-Sea Rescue" by Denise Chow, Huffington Post

Aug. 13, 2012, (http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/08/13/hexagon-spy-satellite-declassified_n_1772408.html)

It's a plot worthy of a Hollywood action movie: 40 years ago, the U.S. Navy carried out a daring mission to retrieve a top-secret film capsule that had settled more than 16,000 feet (4,876 meters) underwater on the ocean floor. At the time, the expedition was the deepest undersea salvage operation ever attempted.

Documents released publicly by the Central Intelligence Agency on Aug. 8 detail the capsule's incredible recovery, using what was at the time the Navy's most sophisticated deep-sea submersible.

[Continue reading at Huffington Post...](#)

20120814-08	13:07	Tom	Video: "Reality Check: Fast and Furious Operation Was Really About U.S. Supporting a Drug Cartel?"
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Video: "Reality Check: Fast and Furious Operation Was Really About U.S. Supporting a Drug Cartel?" by Ben Swann, FOX

Aug. 9, 2012, (http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=KKzy6vdO3Ok)

Ben Swann "Reality Check" takes a look at some stunning new accusations by a high ranking member of the Sinaloa Drug Cartel that Fast and Furious was about the U.S. supporting one cartel while attempting to shut down others.

20120814-10	13:42	Tom	"Silent Running"
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"Silent Running" by Bill Gertz, *The Washington Free Beacon*

Aug. 14, 2012, (<http://freebeacon.com/silent-running/>)



Russian Akula Submarine (AP)

A Russian nuclear-powered attack submarine armed with long-range cruise missiles operated undetected in the Gulf of Mexico for several weeks and its travel in strategic U.S. waters was only confirmed after it left the region, the Washington Free Beacon has learned.

It is only the second time since 2009 that a Russian attack submarine has patrolled so close to U.S. shores.

[Continue reading at The Washington Free Beacon...](#)

20120814-22	23:22	Tom	"How Did This Border Patrol Agent's Gun Snap in Half?"
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"How Did This Border Patrol Agent's Gun Snap in Half?" by Liz Klimas, The Blaze

Aug. 13, 2012, (<http://www.theblaze.com/stories/how-did-this-border-patrol-agents-gun-snap-in-half/>)

There is a case to be made for traditional metal weapons over newer, polymer technology.

Example A is provided by The Loadout Room, a subset of SOFREP.com (the special operations forces report). It reports the following photos come from a border patrol agent who fell off his ATV while training. The short visit to the hospital by the agent wasn't the only collateral damage of the fall, though. His P2000 handgun snapped at the handle.

[Continue reading at The Blaze...](#)

20120814-12	14:40	Ben	Photo: Today's Lunch at Apple
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Tasty Salad with Chicken Vegetable Soup

20120814-13	15:49	SteveM	Fw: Graphic: It Is Up to the Voters
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Should be a billboard...



**The Navy
Seals
removed
one threat
to
America...**

*It is up to the Voters to
remove the other*

[Is Paul Ryan the "other"? -SteveB]

20120814-14

15:32

SteveB

Graphic: "10 Things The Romney Campaign Doesn't Want You To Know About Paul Ryan"

"10 Things The Romney Campaign Doesn't Want You To Know About Paul Ryan" by Marika, MoveOn.org

Aug. 13, 2012, (<http://front.moveon.org/10-things-the-romney-campaign-doesnt-want-you-to-know-about-paul-ryan/?rc=pr10thingemail>)

**PAUL RYAN
REVEALED**

1. His economic plan would cost America 1 million jobs in the first year.
2. He'd kill Medicare and replace it with a voucher program that doesn't guarantee coverage.
3. He'd pickpocket the middle class to line the pockets of the rich. His tax plan is Robin Hood in reverse.
4. He's an anti-choice extremist.
5. He'd dismantle Social Security.
6. He'd eliminate Pell grants for more than 1 million low-income students.
7. He'd give \$40 billion in subsidies to Big Oil.
8. He's another Koch-head politician. The billionaire Koch brothers are some of Ryan's biggest political contributors.
9. He opposes gay rights.
10. He thinks an "I got mine, who cares if you're okay" philosophy is admirable and devotes himself to Ayn Rand's philosophy of selfishness as a virtue.



 **#PaulRyanRevealed**

20120814-15

16:21

SteveB

"Mitt Romney Campaign Launches First Medicare TV Ad Salvo"

The height of hypocrisy!

"Mitt Romney Campaign Launches First Medicare TV Ad Salvo" by Sam Stein, Huffington Post

Aug. 14, 2012, (http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/08/14/mitt-romney-medicare-ad_n_1776522.html)

The Mitt Romney campaign has released its first Medicare-related ad since it announced Paul Ryan as its vice presidential nominee, attacking the president for gutting the program to pay for Obamacare.

"You paid in to Medicare for years. Every paycheck. Now, when you need it, Obama has cut \$716 billion dollars from Medicare," the ad says. "The Romney-Ryan plan protects Medicare benefits for today's seniors and strengthens the plan for the next generation."

Video: http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=l4gPvToKTWU.

There is no word yet on just how much money is being devoted to this ad buy. But, if it's a big investment, this could be a seminal moment of the campaign.

The conventional wisdom is that the Romney-Ryan ticket is the one that's most vulnerable on the Medicare front. Both men have advocated turning the program into a quasi-voucher system, in which recipients would get a certain amount of money to purchase private insurance. This would effectively end Medicare as it's known, though both Romney and Ryan have since accepted a twist to the plan, allowing voucher recipients to purchase traditional Medicare coverage. Either way, their approach is more drastic than what has been adopted by Obama.

Now it appears that the Romney ticket has calculated that it must launch the first salvo. And by accusing Obama of cutting more than \$700 billion from Medicare, it is hoping to duplicate the success that GOP congressional candidates had in 2010 when they ran against that provision.

There are only a few problems with this. The first is that Obama didn't necessarily "cut" Medicare; he limited the expected rate of growth in the program on the supplier side by eliminating waste, fraud and abuse, mostly in Medicare Advantage. And the savings that Obama achieved are adopted by Ryan in his own budget.

For Republicans, meanwhile, the ad creates its own political discomfort. The party has long bemoaned Democrats for using scare tactics when it comes to any substantive discussion on Medicare reform. (Among other things, they point to the ads Obama ran against Sen. John McCain in 2008). With Romney now engaged in this very act, the question is: Will any of those "Mediscare" complaints be directed his way?

In response to the ad, Obama campaign spokeswoman Lis Smith emailed the following statement:

Mitt Romney's ad is dishonest and hypocritical. The savings his ad attacks do not cut a single guaranteed Medicare benefit, and Mitt Romney embraced the very same savings when he promised he'd sign Paul Ryan's budget. Because the President is eliminating subsidies to insurance companies and cutting waste and fraud, we've extended the life of Medicare by eight years. The truth is that the Romney-Ryan budget would end Medicare as we know it: people with Medicare would be left with nothing but a voucher in place of the guaranteed benefits they rely on today. And they do it all to pay for massive tax cuts for millionaires and billionaires – the very same top-down economic scheme that crashed our economy and devastated the middle class in the first place.

"Florida Newspapers: Romney Is in Big, Big Trouble" by Billionaires for Wealthcare, Daily Kos

Aug. 12, 2012, (<http://www.dailykos.com/story/2012/08/12/1119510/-PANIC-MSM-Romney-is-in-Big-Big-Trouble?detail=hide>)

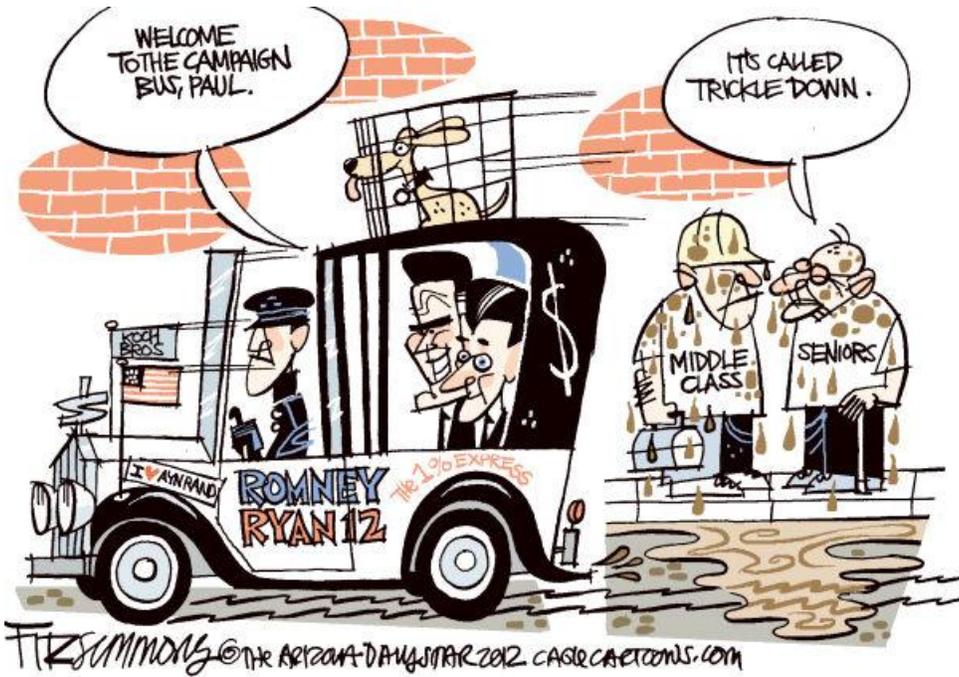


The Florida papers are destroying Paul Ryan. So much so that a distraught and panicked Village believes "Mitt Romney is in big, big trouble" for selecting the man who wants to pull the plug on Grandma.

The very first available headlines from the all important swing state of Florida are devastating.

[Continue reading at Daily Kos...](#)

Are you sprayed on?



20120814-17 18:33 SteveG & Bill Fw: The Best Lawyer Story of All Time

The United Way realized that it had never received a donation from the city's most successful lawyer. So a United Way volunteer paid the lawyer a visit in his lavish office. The volunteer opened the meeting by saying, "Our research shows that even though your annual income is over two million dollars, you don't give a penny to charity. Wouldn't you like to give something back to your community through the United Way?"

The lawyer thinks for a minute and says, "First, did your research also show you that my mother is dying after a long, painful illness and she has huge medical bills that are far beyond her ability to pay? Embarrassed, the United Way Rep mumbles, "Uh... no, I didn't know that."

"Secondly," says the lawyer, "my brother, a disabled veteran, is blind and confined to a wheelchair and is unable to support his wife and six children." The stricken United Way Rep begins to stammer an apology."

"Thirdly, did your research also show you that my sister's husband died in a dreadful car accident, leaving her penniless with a mortgage and three children, one of whom is disabled and another that has learning disabilities requiring a huge array of private tutors?" The humiliated United Way Rep, completely beaten, says, "I'm so sorry, I had no idea."

And the lawyer says, "So . . . if I didn't give any money to them, what makes you think I'd give any to you?"

20120814-19 20:53 SteveB Joke: The Billionaire & Ayn Rand Fan (reply to SteveG, above)

(This joke below is based on SteveG/Bill's email, above)

BECAUSE THE BILLIONAIRE (and Ayn Rand fan) **DID IT ALL ON HIS OWN!** HE DOESN'T OWE ANYBODY! NOT EVEN HIS OWN MOTHER, RIGHT?

Not his schools, not his teachers, not his friends, not his preachers, not all the millions of workers and scientists and administrators and geniuses who created the culture, the government, and the economy which allow the money of billionaires to grow (at the expense, often, of someone poorer).

It takes more than an individual (as Elizabeth Warren said well and the President rephrased so poorly). It takes more than a family. **It takes a planet.** And that planet of culture, of people, of living things is owed a price. Anything less is slavery and rape.

That's pretty much all there is to it, in my book. What do you guys think?

The Billionaire (And Ayn Rand Fan)

The United Way realized that it had never received a donation from the city's most successful billionaire. So a United Way Volunteer Representative paid the billionaire a visit in his lavish office.

The United Way Rep opened the meeting by saying, "Our research shows that even though your annual income is over \$200 million, you don't give a penny to charity. Wouldn't you like to give something back to your community through the United Way?"

The billionaire (and Ayn Rand fan) thought for a minute and said, "First, did your research also show you that my mother is dying after a long, painful illness, and she has huge medical bills that are far beyond her ability to pay?"

Embarrassed, the United Way Rep mumbled, "Uh... no, I didn't know that."

"Secondly," said the billionaire, "My brother, a disabled veteran, is blind and confined to a wheelchair and is unable to support his wife and six children."

The stricken United Way Rep began to stammer an apology.

"Thirdly, did your research also show you that my sister's husband died in a dreadful car accident, leaving her penniless, with a mortgage and three children, one of whom is disabled and another who has learning disabilities requiring a huge array of private tutors?"

The humiliated United Way Rep, completely beaten, said, "I'm so sorry, I had no idea."

The billionaire leaned toward the poor United Way Rep menacingly, "So...if I didn't give any money to them, what makes you think I'd give any to you?"

[20120814-20](#) 21:12 SteveM Re: The Billionaire & Ayn Rand Fan (reply to SteveB, above)

...sounds like Joe Biden.

[20120814-21](#) 22:52 SteveG "Who Is the Smallest Government Spender Since Eisenhower? Would You Believe It's Barack Obama?"

On the article below, I suggest reading the comments at the end of the article.

"Who Is the Smallest Government Spender Since Eisenhower? Would You Believe It's Barack Obama?" by Rick Ungar, *Forbes*

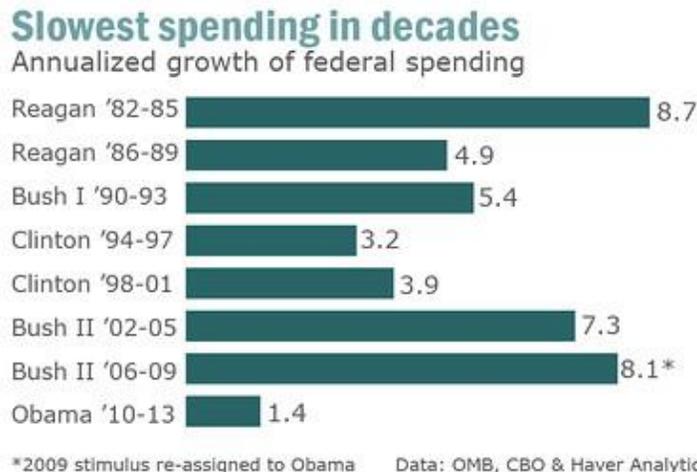
May 24, 2012, (<http://www.forbes.com/sites/rickungar/2012/05/24/who-is-the-smallest-government-spender-since-eisenhower-would-you-believe-its-barack-obama/>)

It's enough to make even the most ardent Obama cynic scratch his head in confusion.

Amidst all the cries of Barack Obama being the most prolific big government spender the nation has ever suffered, Marketwatch is reporting that our president has actually been tighter with a buck than any United States president since Dwight D. Eisenhower.

Who knew?

Check out the chart:



So, how have the Republicans managed to persuade Americans to buy into the whole "Obama as big spender" narrative?

It might have something to do with the first year of the Obama presidency where the federal budget increased a whopping 17.9%—going from \$2.98 trillion to \$3.52 trillion. I'll bet you think that this is the result of the Obama sponsored stimulus plan that is so frequently vilified by the conservatives...but you would be wrong.

The first year of any incoming president term is saddled—for better or for worse—with the budget set by the president whom immediately precedes the new occupant of the White House. Indeed, not only was the 2009 budget the property of George W. Bush—and passed by the 2008 Congress—it was in effect four months before Barack Obama took the oath of office.

Accordingly, the first budget that can be blamed on our current president began in 2010 with the budgets running through and including including fiscal year 2013 standing as charges on the Obama account, even if a President Willard M. Romney takes over the office on January 20, 2013.

So, how do the actual Obama annual budgets look?

Courtesy of Marketwatch (http://articles.marketwatch.com/2012-05-22/commentary/31802270_1_spending-federal-budget-drunken-sailor):

- In fiscal 2010 (the first Obama budget) spending fell 1.8% to \$3.46 trillion.
- In fiscal 2011, spending rose 4.3% to \$3.60 trillion.
- In fiscal 2012, spending is set to rise 0.7% to \$3.63 trillion, according to the Congressional Budget Office's estimate of the budget that was agreed to last August.
- Finally in fiscal 2013 — the final budget of Obama's term — spending is scheduled to fall 1.3% to \$3.58 trillion. Read the CBO's latest budget outlook: (<http://www.cbo.gov/publication/42905>)

No doubt, many will wish to give the credit to the efforts of the GOP controlled House of Representatives. That's fine if that's what works for you.

However, you don't get to have it both ways. Credit whom you will, but if you are truly interested in a fair analysis of the Obama years to date—at least when it comes to spending—you're going to have to acknowledge that under the Obama watch, even President Reagan would have to give our current president a thumbs up when it comes to his record for stretching a dollar.

Of course, the Heritage Foundation is having none of it, attempting to counter the actual numbers by pretending that the spending initiated by the Bush Administration is the fault of Obama. As I understand the argument Heritage is putting forth—and I have provided the link to the Heritage rebuttal so you can decide for yourself if Marketwatch, in using the baseline that Obama inherited, is making it too easy on the President:

<http://blog.heritage.org/2012/05/24/setting-obamas-great-fiscal-restraint-record-straight/>.

But then, with the Heritage Foundation being the creator of the individual mandate concept in health care only to rebut the same when it was no longer politically convenient, I'm not quite sure why anyone believes much of anything they have to say any longer. With their history of reversing course for convenience, I can't help but wonder, should they find themselves reviewing the spending record of a President Romney four years from today, whether they might be tempted to use the Obama numbers as the baseline for such a new Administration.

NOTE: Some of the comments to this piece have gotten well out of control, involving threats and obscenity to other commenters and myself. While I welcome and encourage comments from all points of view, obscene remarks are removed and not tolerated. I'll be happy to jump back into the conversation and reply to some comments when those who are misusing the forum settle down.

Comments [just a sampling of really good stuff]:

Doug McManus: I don't think your article holds water. To my knowledge Congress has not passed a budget in the last two or three years? You as Obama are blaming everything on Bush. What about Obama's \$800 billion stimulus, and the bail out and the theft of GM and Chrysler? What about the explosion of entitlement programs. And last but not least, the attempted take-over of our health care system, Obamacare? What about the 2008 and 2009 democratic congress? Pretty tough to come up with facts when you don't have a budget from 2010-2013. May you should take a look at your research and re-write the article?

Rick Ungar: Doug- I appreciate you may not like the article, but I'm afraid that it is you who is a bit confused on the facts. For starters, there is a budget passed every year. The 2012 budget was passed on Dec. 11, 2011: <http://www.districtdispatch.org/2011/12/congress-passes-fy-2012-budget/>. The 2011 budget was passed on Apr. 14, 2010: <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/04/15/us/politics/15congress.html>. The 2010 budget was passed on Apr. 3, 2009: <http://online.wsj.com/article/SB123870974208284245.html>.

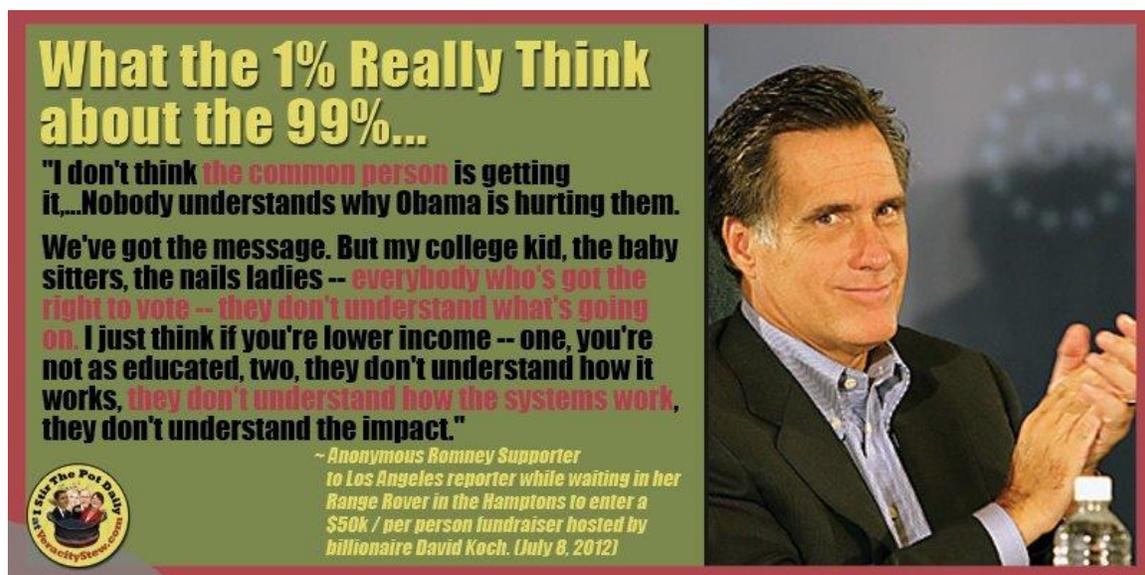
I'm not blaming anything on Bush. I'm afraid you can't change the reality that every president comes into office with a first year budget that was passed the year preceding. That is not an opinion- this is a very simple reality. The Obama stimulus was built into the numbers used to arrive at the Obama increases in the budget (please look at the cites on the graph I provided based on CBO numbers.) I suspect that you, like many others, chose to forget that the initial bailouts to save the banks was proposed by President Bush and passed by Congress (remember Henry Paulson- Bush's Sec. of the treasury)

I appreciate that you don't like Obamacare, entitlement programs and the bailouts of the auto industry (although you really do yourself in by calling it a 'theft' as serious conservatives do not characterize the bail outs in this manner) – but that does not change the federal budget numbers. They are what they are. And what about the 2008-2009 Congress? Again, I get that you don't like that Congress but how exactly is that relevant to this article beyond the fact that the 2008 Congress did pass the Bush 2009 budget?

All due respect, maybe you should take look at your research and re-write your comment as you are kind of embarrassing yourself. And if you are going to be wildly off on the facts, you might just be a bit nicer in your criticism as I could have been far more harsh in my response given how completely off you are.

Rick Ungar: By the way, Doug, I suspect you are forgetting-or never knew- that a full 1/3 of the stimulus was a tax cut, thus not a federal budget expenditure.

20120814-23 23:58 SteveG Quote: R0mney Supporter: What the 1% Really Think



What the 1% Really Think about the 99%...

"I don't think the common person is getting it...Nobody understands why Obama is hurting them. We've got the message. But my college kid, the baby sitters, the nails ladies -- everybody who's got the right to vote -- they don't understand what's going on. I just think if you're lower income -- one, you're not as educated, two, they don't understand how it works, they don't understand how the systems work, they don't understand the impact."

~ Anonymous Romney Supporter to Los Angeles reporter while waiting in her Range Rover in the Hamptons to enter a \$50k / per person fundraiser hosted by billionaire David Koch. (July 8, 2012)



<http://www.forums.caves.org/viewtopic.php?f=1&t=8126>

(by Caver Tim)



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

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

Your email address will always be kept strictly confidential.

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

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

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FRIENDS OF THE MIDDLE NEWSLETTER #205 — AUG. 16, 2012

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

INDEX: Click here.

The Doublespeak Twins — Big R and Little R

(posted by Steven W. Baker / SteveB, Aug. 16, 2012)

Joe Biden: Congressman Ryan has given definition to the vague commitments that Romney's been making. There's definition to it now. It's clear. When they talked about their plan, not just their budget plan, but their plan across the board, they called it gutsy. Gutsy... No, I'm serious. Now look, what's gutsy about giving millionaires another tax break? What's gutsy, what's gutsy about gutting Medicare...Medicaid...education? What's gutsy? ... Folks, this is not only not new, it's not fair. It's not fair to the middle class, and the working poor — and it will not grow the economy or reduce the deficit. Ladies and gentlemen, we've seen this movie before, and we know how it ends. (<http://www.politico.com/news/stories/0812/79765.html?hp=r3>)

"Railroaded" by Kathy Malloy, OpEdNews

Aug. 15, 2012, (<http://www.opednews.com/articles/Railroaded-by-Kathy-Malloy-120815-601.html>)



The Doublespeak Twins have confused "bold" for "hazy" in their description of their Medicare "reform" plan. The Big R rambles nonsensically about "choice" and "options" and "preservation" while the fast-talking Little R widens

his round blue eyes and spits out a speed-of-sound succession of syllables which, slowed to the perception of the human ear, sound something like "not vouchers, exactly."

The plan from Team RomRyan has been characterized by the corporate media as "bold," gutsy," and even "revolutionary." Hmmnnnn ... er, what is their reform plan, exactly? Am I missing something, because it seems more "obscure, cloudy, and vague" where I'm sitting.

For a couple of Ayn Rand ideologues, they sure lack her clarity and straightforward objectivism.

Their Obama attack ads claim: "When he ran for president, he said he'd protect Medicare, but did you know that he has taken \$716 billion out of the Medicare trust fund? The money you paid for your guaranteed health care is going to a massive new government program that's not for you. The Romney-Ryan plan protects Medicare benefits for today's seniors and strengthens the plan for the next generation," the ad's narrator says.

Okay. Deep breath. This \$716 billion claim by the Double-R ranch is bat squeeze.

Robert Reich explains it far better than can I:

Stumping in Florida today, Mitt Romney charged President Obama's Affordable Care Act will 'cut more than \$700 billion' out of Medicare. What Romney didn't say was that his running-mate's budget -- approved by House Republicans and by Romney himself -- would cut Medicare by the same amount.

The big difference, though, is the Affordable Care Act achieves these savings by reducing Medicare payments to drug companies, hospitals, and other providers rather than cutting payments to Medicare beneficiaries. A July 24, 2012 report from the non-partisan Congressional Budget Office confirms this.

The Romney-Ryan plan, by contrast, achieves its savings by turning Medicare into a voucher whose value doesn't keep up with expected increases in healthcare costs -- thereby shifting the burden onto Medicare beneficiaries, who will have to pay an average of \$6,500 a year more for their Medicare insurance, according an analysis of the Republican plan by the Congressional Budget Office.

Moreover, the Affordable Care Act uses its Medicare savings to help children and lower-income Americans afford health care, and to help seniors pay for prescription drugs by filling the so-called 'donut hole' in Medicare Part D coverage. The Romney-Ryan plan uses the savings to finance even bigger tax cuts for the very wealthy.

Spread the word. Don't allow the GOP to get away with this demagoguery.

GOP headliners and surrogates are out in force railing against the president and critics of their plan to end Medicare as we know it. Mittens himself responded to the justifiable reaction to his ill-defined Medicare proposals by calling the President "angry, and desperate to hold onto power."

But if Reich and other critics are wrong, then all RomRyan have to do is put their considerable monies where their mouths are and show us their actual, black-and-white, detailed and defined Medicare "reform" plan.

Depending on the time of day, and perhaps position of Mercury in the heavens, Romeny either has a "very different" Medicare plan from Ryan's, or "it's exactly the same." What it isn't, obviously, is written down anywhere for anybody to see. How Cheneyesque.

Talk about your Etch-A-Sketch -- Mittens first tried to distance himself from the radical Ryan budget by claiming HIS Medicare plan was different (uh, then why choose a guy whose claim to Neocon fame was gutting this specific program? But I digress), then he did a 180 on the CBS morning show and said he and Ryan were "exactly on the same page" on Medicare.

Are you starting to notice a pattern, Truthseekers? He won't issue his old tax returns because he knows they will reveal his multiple rich-guy evasions and sneaky foreign bank accounts designed to rob the American people of tax

monies. He won't put forward a clear, defined Medicare plan that details how HIS proposals will protect the program -- as he claims -- and still cut the deficit. And now he can't even shoot straight on how his ideas differ (if at all) from his chosen running mate. He doesn't rank high on the honesty scale. More like a used-car salesman than trustworthy national leader.

Given Romney's revisionist history and general lack of "truthiness," it's not remarkable that he would radically change his tune in the course of 72 hours, but it does weaken his chosen image as The Man With the Plan to Save America! Especially since he once embraced -- and implemented -- so many of the very provisions of The Affordable Care Act he now so vehemently despises. What's next?

Can we withstand another 10 weeks of Willard-induced wishy-washy whiplash on the important issues?



20120815-02 06:32 MarthaH "American Gun Lovers Turn to Russian AK-47s"

"American Gun Lovers Turn to Russian AK-47s" by Andrew E. Kramer, *The New York Times*

Aug. 14, 2012, (<http://www.nytimes.com/2012/08/15/business/a-kalashnikov-factory-in-russia-survives-on-sales-to-us-gun-owners.html?pagewanted=all>)

(U.S. civilians are now buying about the same number of Kalashnikov-style weapons as the Russian army and police.)

(IZHEVSK, Russia) The nickname of this town, home of the factory that makes Kalashnikov rifles, is the "Armory of Russia." Over the years, it has armed a good number of other countries, too, as the lathes and presses of the Izhevsk Machine Works clanged around the clock to forge AK-47s and similar guns for insurgents and armies around the world.

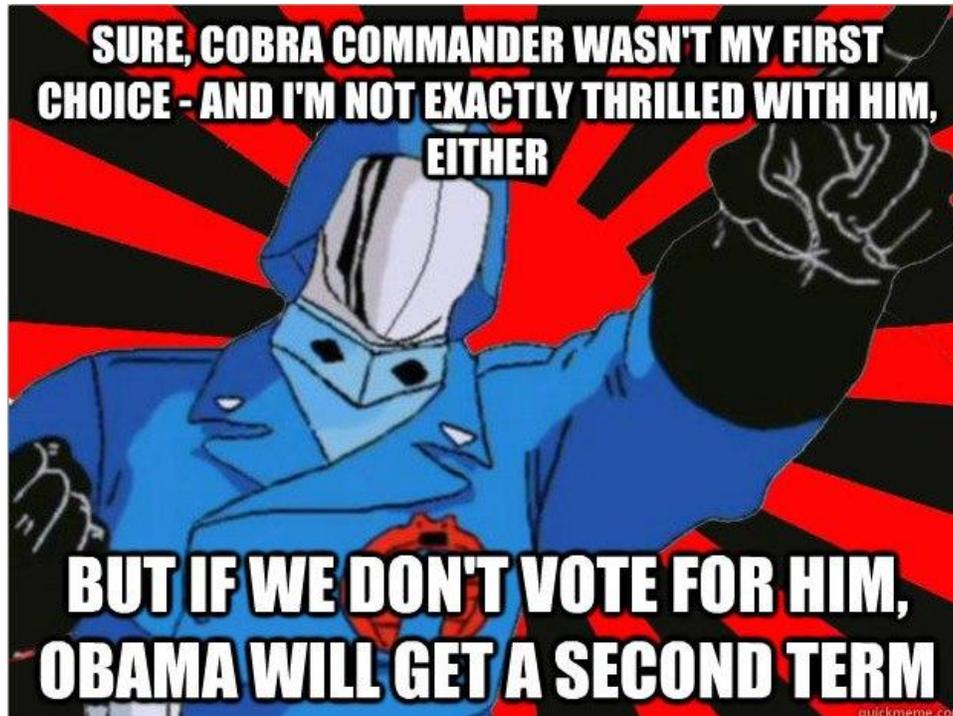
But these days, many of Izhevsk's weapons are headed somewhere else: the United States.

Despite the gun's violent history — or perhaps because of it — American hunters and gun enthusiasts are snapping up tens of thousands of Kalashnikov rifles and shotguns. Demand is so brisk that the factory has shifted its focus

from military to civilian manufacture over the last two years. United States sales of the civilian versions, sold under the brand name Saiga, rose by 50 percent last year, according to officials at the factory, known as Izhmash.

[Continue reading at The New York Times...](#)

20120815-03 07:21 Tom Graphic: Vote for 'Cobra Commander'



<http://www.usasurvival.org/911.shtml>

[Well...yes...the cobra is a snake and dangerous... -SteveB]

20120815-04 10:39 MarthaH "Why 90 Million Americans Won't Vote in November"

"Why 90 Million Americans Won't Vote in November" by Susan Page, *USA Today*

Aug. 15, 2012, (<http://www.usatoday.com/news/politics/story/2012-08-15/non-voters-obama-romney/57055184/1>)

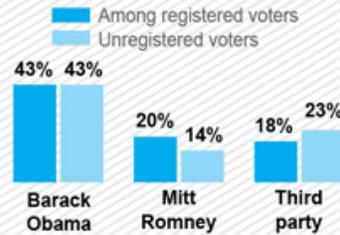
They could turn a too-close-to-call race into a landslide for President Obama— but by definition they probably won't.

Call them the unlikely voters.

A nationwide *USA Today*/Suffolk University Poll of people who are eligible to vote but aren't likely to do so finds that these stay-at-home Americans back Obama's re-election over Republican Mitt Romney by more than 2-1. Two-thirds of them say they are registered to vote. Eight in 10 say the government plays an important role in their lives.

Does every vote count? Why some Americans don't think so

If the election were today, whom would you vote for/lean to?

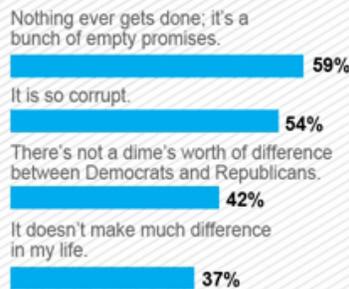


Do the two major parties do a good job of representing Americans' political views, or do you think a third party or multiple parties are necessary?



Why don't you pay much attention to politics?

(Percentage who agreed with each statement)



Which statement comes closer to the way you feel about not voting in November?

It will bother me because I will be letting other people elect the president.

50%

It won't bother me because my vote doesn't make any difference anyway.

41%

Source: USA TODAY/Suffolk University Poll of 800 adults July 30-Aug. 8. Margin of error ± 3.5 percentage points.

By Janet Loehrke, USA TODAY

Even so, they cite a range of reasons for declaring they won't vote or saying the odds are no better than 50-50 that they will: They're too busy. They aren't excited about either candidate. Their vote doesn't really matter. And nothing ever gets done, anyway.

"I don't think Obama helped us as much as he promised," says John Harrington, 52, a heavy-equipment operator from Farmington, Minn., who was among those surveyed. Since 2008, when Harrington voted for Obama, the financial downturn has forced him to sell his home in Arizona, move to Minnesota to be near a daughter and put him on the road to Nebraska, North Dakota and Iowa to find work.

His wife "loves" Obama and is sure to vote in November, but he's not certain whether he'll get there this time.

Even in 2008, when turnout was the highest in any presidential election since 1960, almost 80 million eligible citizens didn't vote. Curtis Gans, director of the non-partisan Center for the Study of the American Electorate, predicts that number will rise significantly this year. He says turnout could ebb to levels similar to 2000, when only 54.2% of those eligible to vote cast a ballot. That was up a bit from 1996, which had the lowest turnout since 1924.

This year, perhaps 90 million Americans who could vote won't. "The long-term trend tends to be awful," Gans says. "There's a lot of lack of trust in our leaders, a lack of positive feelings about political institutions, a lack of quality education for large segments of the public, a lack of civic education, the fragmenting effects of waves of communications technology, the cynicism of the coverage of politics — I could go on with a long litany."

There's also the relentlessly negative tone of this year's campaign. The majority of TV ads don't try to persuade voters to support one candidate but rather to convince them not to back the other guy. Romney ads portray Obama as a failed president and a liar. Obama ads describe Romney as a heartless corporate raider whose firm has laid off American workers while he parked some of his fortune in a Swiss bank account. (Both candidates dispute the truthfulness of the other side's commercials.)

"I really don't know much about him, but from what I hear, he's all about putting taxes on the middle-class people, and I've heard that he's put his money in overseas accounts," Jamie Palmer, 35, a mother of three from St. Joseph, Mo., says of Romney, echoing accusations made in Democratic ads. "I think that's wrong." So will she vote? Not a chance.

Palmer has never voted. "If a candidate I liked ran for the presidency, that had the right things to say, I'd go vote," she says. "But they say the same things; they make promises; they don't keep them. It's ridiculous. If I vote, nothing is going to come of it. It's just going to be like it is right now."

Who's the vice president?

Many of these unlikely voters are suspicious of and disconnected from politics. In the survey, six in 10 say they don't pay attention to politics because "nothing ever gets done"; 54% call politics "corrupt." Only 39% could correctly name the vice president, Joe Biden. (By contrast, a Pew Research Center poll in 2010 found 59% of American adults could name the vice president.)

On the other hand, they do see a difference between the two major parties: 53% disagree with the statement that "there's not a dime's worth of difference between Democrats and Republicans." Obama scores a huge advantage among all the unlikely voters. By 43%-18%, they support the Democratic incumbent over his Republican challenger.

"There's this pool of people that Barack Obama doesn't even need to persuade," says David Paleologos, director of the Suffolk University Political Research Center, which took the survey. "All he needs to do is find them and identify them and get them to the polls. It's like a treasure chest. But the bad news is that the treasure chest is locked. ...

"You've got this overriding sense of bitterness and people who have been beaten down by the economy and the negativity and the lack of trust, and that's the key that Obama can't find. And he's running out of time."

Two-thirds of the unlikely voters say they voted four years ago, backing Obama by more than 2-1 over Republican John McCain. That helps explain why Obama's campaign is spending millions of dollars on the most elaborate field operation in U.S. political history, aimed at delivering both core supporters and reluctant ones to the polls.

Romney's pick of Wisconsin Rep. Paul Ryan as his running mate has opened a barrage of Democratic attacks on Ryan's proposal to move toward a voucher-like system in Medicare. Democratic strategists argue the issue could energize some of the president's discouraged backers, especially older ones.

Many of the nation's unlikely voters report hard times over the past four years. Only a third call their household finances good or excellent. Close to half say their annual household income is less than \$60,000 a year. They tend to have lower levels of education than likely voters; nearly six in 10 have no more than a high school diploma.

The ranks of eligible non-voters lean toward the Democratic candidate in most though not all election years. The Democratic tilt among them is much greater in this survey than it was in 2004 or 2008 in the Gallup Poll just before Election Day. Then, Democrats had the advantage in voter enthusiasm — an asset they've lost this year.

The process of registering to vote doesn't seem to present a major obstacle. Two-thirds say registering is easy and can be done pretty quickly; 16% say it takes too much time and is too complicated. The new wave of voter ID laws, which experts predict may reduce turnout a bit, doesn't seem to be an issue: 75% support requiring citizens to show a photo ID before voting.

The top reason given by unregistered voters for not having signed up is their busy lives. Among the top reasons given by registered voters for not bothering to go to the polls: not liking either candidate and not feeling that their vote matters.

Lisa Goicochea, 19, a student at LaGuardia Community College in New York City, favors Obama. "I like that he's been trying to go through with the Obamacare, which will benefit a lot of people," she says of the health care law. But she doesn't plan to vote and isn't interested in politics.

USA Today's Susan Page discusses the results of a *USA Today*/Suffolk University Poll of Americans who say they are not likely to vote in November.

"Sometimes people actually enjoy talking about this, and I feel left out," she says. When it comes to the government, she adds a bit ruefully, "it does matter."

Many unlikely voters feel some regret about not going to the polls. Half agree with the statement that not voting will bother them in November "because I will be letting other people elect the president." Four in 10 say it won't bother them "because my vote doesn't make any difference anyway."

What could convince them to vote?

About one in 10 say they could be drawn by different candidates, by being convinced someone could fix the nation's problems, and by feeling better informed. Asked to name someone whose presidential bid would prompt them to vote, Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton was the most frequently cited, by 7%. Texas Rep. Ron Paul, who sought the GOP nomination, was next, named by 3%.

Annie Provencher, 60, a retired cashier from St. Pauls, N.C., voted for Bill Clinton and for Democrat John Kerry in 2004. She didn't vote in 2008, and she's not sure she will this time. She knows she doesn't like Obama but isn't sure about Romney. She plans to rely on the advice of her sister, who lives in Massachusetts, on how Romney did as governor.

If Hillary Clinton were running, she volunteers, "I'd be back there, the first one in line when the polls opened."

The survey identified one extremely persuasive argument. Among Obama supporters, 85% say they would go to the polls if they knew their vote would help swing a close election to the president; 70% of Romney supporters say the same for their candidate.

Given the potential closeness of this election, this might turn out to be the case.

20120815-05	10:40	Art	Re: Graphic: It Is Up to the Voters (FotM Newsletter #204)
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Thanks SteveB, Lot's of interesting stuff. One thing that continues to amaze me is cartoon such as the "Navy SEALs removed one threat now it's up to the voters to remove the other threat."

As someone who actually served in the military for 30 years and in a lot of combat, I really resent this cr*p from a bunch of stay at home REMFS. The decision to go get Bin Laden was a very bold decision by the President. Once made, it was carried out very well by the SEALs.

Commanders-in-Chiefs do Commander-in-Chief things and SEALS do SEAL things. In this case both did them very, very well. If you want a case of not very well, just look at Bush and the invasion of Iraq. The troops largely pulled the irons out of the fire despite terrible decisions by Bush and the Administration. Of course 4000 of them died doing it along with 10,000 more terribly injured, but the Republicans seem to have forgotten that little episode.

20120815-06	10:44	Susette	Re: America Doesn't Like Mitt R0mney (reply to SteveB, FotM Newsletter #204)
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Has he expressed any gratitude for what he has received in life?

20120815-07	11:25	SteveB	Re: America Doesn't Like Mitt R0mney (reply to Susette, above)
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Good question, Susette. I googled it and all I found was this one thing (and I'm not completely sure even this one bit of appreciation was actually written by the Mittens):

Mitt Romney's Gratitude List (<http://www.funkiness.com/2012/05/mitt-romneys-gratitude-list.html>)

I, Mitt Romney, am grateful for:

- Speech writers.
- Aqua Net.
- A dad who could lend me money.
- Offshore accounts.
- Super PACs.
- Ronald Reagan.
- Caviar.
- Dog crates and bungee cords.
- My tan.
- Newt Gingrich, Michele Bachmann, Herman Cain and Rick Santorum for making me seem almost acceptable by comparison.
- A low marginal tax rate.
- My tailor.
- My jawline.
- Yachts.
- Vacation homes.
- 8 car garages.
- Ronald Reagan.
- Private jets.
- Fox News.
- Trees that are the right height.
- Tax shelters.
- Cigars.
- Goldman Sachs.
- American flag lapel pins.
- Other "persons" who are 'seriously conservative.'
- Those who are not paying attention.

20120815-08	12:05	SteveG	"Selfishness as Virtue: The Narcissistic Politics of Paul Ryan"
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"Selfishness as Virtue: The Narcissistic Politics of Paul Ryan" by Joe Conason, *The National Memo*

Aug. 15th, 2012, (<http://www.nationalmemo.com/selfishness-as-virtue-the-narcissistic-politics-of-paul-ryan/>)

Often labeled a “reformer” for his determination to privatize Medicare and Social Security, Paul Ryan on closer inspection appears to be simply another Republican politician – like his new patron Mitt Romney – whose first priority is his own self-interest.

Both the ideology and the legislation he champions prove that he is utterly sincere in his admiration of Ayn Rand, the kooky libertarian author who elaborated her philosophy in a book candidly titled *The Virtue of Selfishness*. (The flavor of this 1964 essay collection can be gleaned from its original title, *The Fascist New Frontier*. Its first draft included a Rand screed that compared President John F. Kennedy with Nazi dictator Adolf Hitler.)

Ryan is a millionaire – one of the most affluent members of Congress – chiefly owing to a series of inheritances from his own family and the family of his wife, an Oklahoma heiress. And like Romney, he would certainly benefit from the tax proposals in the “Ryan budget,” which provides even greater benefits for wealthy families like his own than the Bush budgets that he supported during the past decade. The Romney-Ryan ticket’s chief policy preoccupation, in fact, is cutting their own taxes yet again while gutting government functions that serve the middle class (while raising taxes on them).

But the self-serving short-sightedness epitomized by Ryan’s ideas extends well beyond cutting taxes for himself and people like him. Consider his voting record on energy and environmental issues, where he has been a faithful servant of Big Oil and “skeptic” of climate change caused by carbon emissions.

That record happens to coincide perfectly with the interests of his wife Janna and her father, a lawyer representing oil and gas interests. Ryan and his wife have already inherited millions of dollars from a trust established by her family; and they own shares in several companies leasing property in Oklahoma and Texas to energy firms that benefit from taxpayer subsidies protected in Ryan’s budget. Although Ryan occasionally complains about “corporate welfare,” he and Romney both oppose any reduction in the multi-billion-dollar tax breaks enjoyed by the oil and gas industry.

As for Ryan’s own inherited wealth, it is money that mostly came from the huge construction company established by his great-grandfather in the 19th century. Ryan Incorporated’s success grew from the construction of railroads, then highways, airports, bridges and other basic public infrastructure – in short, from government contracts. (Its website proudly outlines the company history and notes that today “the Company performs residential, commercial, industrial and power site work, landfill construction and capping and full-service golf course building/remodeling for both public and private customers.”

But while Ryan benefited personally from more than a century of construction that helped to create American society and a prosperous middle class, his budget serves only the super-rich generation of termites who would allow U.S. infrastructure to crumble, rather than provide sufficient resources to maintain and modernize it. Should the Ryan budget ever become law, very little or no federal money will remain available in future decades for such basic purposes of government. That is fine with him, evidently because Ryan’s own fortunes are no longer tied to the family construction business. (His cousins who still run the company would be wise to vote for anyone but him.)

Then there is Ryan’s longtime obsession with abolishing Social Security as a public insurance system, which first drew attention to him during the Bush administration in 2005. The Bush White House suffered political disaster by pursuing a privatization plan as he urged them to do. Strangely, while Ryan is decades away from retirement age, he has already collected Social Security in the form of survivor benefits. For two years he received a check every month, following the tragic early death of his father when the future Congressman was only 16 years old.

Thanks to Social Security, Ryan was able to save money for college – a story similar to that of Senator Al Franken’s wife Franni, who lost her father at an early age and attended college thanks to federal survivor benefits. But while Franni Franken’s experience ensured that she and her husband became staunch defenders of Social Security, Ryan is eager to deprive future orphans of the guaranteed support that he received.

If selfishness is truly a virtue, then Ryan is without peer. His ideas comprise a taxonomy of narcissistic public policy – from taxes to climate change, infrastructure, and social insurance — that would surely gratify his idol.

[20120815-09](#) 13:24 SteveB FINALLY! MITT ROMNEY'S TAX RETURNS POSTED ONLINE!

<http://www.romneyryan.com/Home/Home.html>

[20120815-14](#) 15:18 Ben Re: FINALLY! MITT ROMNEY'S TAX RETURNS POSTED ONLINE! (reply to SteveB, above)

Funny!

[20120815-01](#) 06:15 SteveB Fw: CREDO Action Petition: Support Medicare for All!

from CREDO Action:

Thanks for taking action.

Here are some ways you can spread the word to make sure Democrats get the message loud and clear.

If you are on Facebook, click here to post the petition to your Wall:

[http://www.facebook.com/share.php?u=http%3A%2F%2fact.credoaction.com%2Fcampaign%2Fmedicare_for_all%2F%3Frc%3Dshare_email](http://www.facebook.com/share.php?u=http%3A%2F%2Fact.credoaction.com%2Fcampaign%2Fmedicare_for_all%2F%3Frc%3Dshare_email).

You can also send the e-mail (below) to your friends and family. Spreading the word is critical, but please only pass this message along to those who know you -- spam hurts our campaign.

Thanks for all you do. —The CREDO Action Team

Here's a sample message to send to your friends:

Subject: Single-payer health care now!

Dear Friend,

By selecting Rep. Paul Ryan to be his running mate, Mitt Romney just made this election about Medicare.

Rep. Ryan was the principal architect of a budget proposal that Paul Krugman called both "ludicrous" and "cruel." And the linchpin of the Ryan budget was his plan to end Medicare.

Now that Ryan's plan to privatize Medicare is in the national spotlight, we need to make sure that the debate isn't just a point/counterpoint between the center right and the far right.

We need to ensure that a progressive vision is on the table to counter what right-wing extremists like Paul Ryan and Mitt Romney are proposing.

We shouldn't destroy Medicare, we should expand it so that it covers everybody.

Tell Democrats: Support Medicare for All. Click below to sign the petition:

http://act.credoaction.com/campaign/medicare_for_all/?r_by=45097-5766577-HI6IqJx&rc=confemail.

[20120815-10](#)

13:26

Art

Fw: Democracy for America Action: Tell Debate Moderators to Ask Romney What He's Hiding!

Sign up! O'Donnell is pretty good.

from Democracy for America:

Mitt Romney picked Paul Ryan for one reason -- Romney is losing.

Democrats and grassroot activists across the country forced Romney to discuss the most controversial elements of his campaign -- his time at Bain Capital and his failure to release his tax returns. All of this has caused Romney's poll numbers to plummet.

Romney hopes Paul Ryan can refocus the campaign back to attacking President Obama and pleasing the Tea-Party base of the Republican Party. Instead, his Vice Presidential pick revealed more of Romney's hypocrisy. **While Romney has refused to disclose his own tax returns to the public, he happily submitted 23 years of taxes to John McCain. This year, he demanded all of his potential Vice Presidential picks provide him with years of returns.** How does he think he can get away with this hypocrisy?

As Lawrence O'Donnell pointed out last night, the Romney/Ryan ticket will do everything in their power to avoid talking to the press about taxes. That's why we need the presidential moderators to ask the tough questions during the upcoming debates.

Click here to watch Lawrence O'Donnell expose Romney/Ryan's hypocrisy on tax returns:

<http://act.democracyforamerica.com/go/1958?t=1&akid=2169.2084018.OLflkO>.

Romney has admitted that his tax returns contain politically damaging information -- information which, if released to the public, could decide this election.

The presidential debate moderators have the power to hold Romney accountable to the truth. Plus, we know they are looking for questions, ideas, and feedback from the public.

This year, the debate commission listened to a petition from thousands of Americans and selected the first female moderator in 20 years to run a debate. Now we have the opportunity to make sure the moderators don't give Romney an easy pass and get away with his double standard.

Call on the presidential debate moderators to ask Mitt Romney what he's hiding:

<http://act.democracyforamerica.com/go/1958?t=2&akid=2169.2084018.OLflkO>.

With your help, we can maintain the pressure and hold Romney accountable.

—Jay Henderson, Political Campaign Manager, Democracy for America

[20120815-11](#)

13:51

Art

Re: The Billionaire & Ayn Rand Fan (reply to SteveB, FotM Newsletter #204)

Well said. One slight correction: I think Elizabeth Warren said it first and the President kind of mauled it a bit on the second try.

[20120815-15](#)

17:51

SteveB

Re: The Billionaire & Ayn Rand Fan (reply to Art, above)

The big black dummy! I don't know why I was thinking the timing was the other way around, but I was confused. That's what happens when people from Indiana get confused.

Thanks Art. I do appreciate being corrected—big, little, or other. I can't often get corrections back into individual issues of the FotM Newsletter, but I try to keep the online Monthly Editions as updated and corrected as I can.

I may make a lot of mistakes, but I'm not as dumb (or as lovable, perhaps) as this dude with the big feet:



[20120815-17](#) 18:39 Art Re: The Billionaire & Ayn Rand Fan (reply to SteveB, above)

That's not you?

[20120815-12](#) 14:47 SteveG "Why Do We Idolize Jerks?"

"Why Do We Idolize Jerks?" from the book *Ascent of the A-Word* by Geoffrey Nunberg, Perseus Books/Altnet
Aug. 15, 2012, (<http://www.altnet.org/why-do-we-idolize-jerks>)

This is an age of a*sholism simply because we find the phenomenon and its practitioners so interesting — or provocative, or compelling, or compellingly repulsive, or sometimes all of those at once. I'm not thinking so much of a*sholes of opportunity like Charlie Sheen and Mel Gibson, or of incidental a*sholes like James Cameron or Brett Favre, whose a*sholism only adds a colorful sidebar to an independently impressive career. There's little about those people that's particular to the age, save that in earlier periods the public probably would have been spared the details of the personal tics and twitches that qualify them for the a*shole label. What's unique to our time is the fixation with certain iconic a*sholes, who exemplify each in his way the problematic allure of the species.

Steve Jobs, for example, was a modern personification of the a*shole as achiever, someone whose a*sholism seems to be inextricable from his success as a leader. The traditional paragons of the type are the storied tough guys from military, business, and public life whose leadership styles are packaged in memoirs and advice books like *What It Takes to Be #1: Lombardi on Leadership*, Rudy Giuliani's *Leadership*, *29 Leadership Secrets* from Jack Welch, and above all a four-foot shelf of inspirational works on George S. Patton, the first general to have been explicitly designated an a*shole by both his men and his superiors. From *Patton on Leadership: Strategic Lessons for Corporate Warfare*, we learn:

If he slapped a soldier, well, it was certainly wrong, but he thought it necessary for the morale of his troops... It was often said that his troops would accomplish the impossible, then go out and do it all over again. "Patton's men" may not have always truly appreciated the man's leadership style at the time. Human nature is such that the discipline and the obedience required by a great leader are so often cause for griping and displeasure. But in retrospect, to have served under Patton was a red badge of courage to be worn forever.

The passage is calculated to reassure even the most abusive manager that he's on the right track; it's for the good of the team, after all, and whatever his subordinates may say about him, they'll be grateful later on.

For some, Jobs fills an analogous role in the digital age. Shortly after his death and the publication of Walter Isaacson's bestselling biography, Tom McNichol wrote in the *Atlantic*:

CEOs, middle managers and wannabe masters of the universe are currently devouring the Steve Jobs biography and thinking to themselves: "See! Steve Jobs was an a*shole and he was one of the most successful businessmen on the planet. Maybe if I become an even bigger a*shole I'll be successful like Steve."

And indeed, some observers depicted Jobs' a*sholism as a deliberate management style. As Alan Deutschman put it in *Newsweek*, Jobs was a "master of psychological manipulation":

He found that by delivering brutal putdowns of his co-workers he could test the strength of their conviction in their own ideas... He found that many of the most brilliant engineers and creative types actually responded well to cruel criticism, since it reinforced their own secret belief that they weren't living up to their vaunted potential.

Not everyone agrees with that assessment of Jobs' skills as a manager; Isaacson says that he was terrible at it, and that success came despite his being a colossal a*shole, not because of it. But it isn't as if there are no advantages to being an a*shole, in business or elsewhere. Life rarely makes moral choices that easy for us. When he was preparing *The No A*shole Rule: Building a Civilized Workplace and Surviving One That Isn't*, Robert Sutton reports he was repeatedly challenged by Silicon Valley leaders who asked him, "What about Steve Jobs?" to the point where he reluctantly added a chapter called "The Virtues of A*sholes." He concedes that judicious displays of irrational anger have their uses—fear of humiliation can be a motivator for employees if it's balanced with the hope of praise, and a well-timed tantrum can get you a boarding pass at the last minute from uncooperative airport staff. And there are fields where behaving like an a*shole offers a clear career advantage, such as professional wrestling and the law. Certain law firms encourage a hardball style that can cross over into what Sandra Day O'Connor has called legal Ramboism. As a former federal judge who became a partner at a notoriously aggressive Wall Street law firm said, "At Skadden Arps...we pride ourselves on being a*sholes. It's part of the firm's culture."

Still, nobody would argue that being an a*shole is essential to business success. The books on leadership that line the business sections of Barnes & Noble offer career models to suit every personality type. One can take one's cues from successful leaders ranging from Bismarck and Golda Meir to Nelson Mandela and the apostle Paul, not to mention Generals Lee, Grant, Custer, and Attila the Hun. With that choice before them, the managers who make for the shelf that holds books on Patton and Jobs aren't settling on a*sholism as a career expedient, they're looking to justify their predilection for it. Few people become a*sholes reluctantly.

In any event, few of the people who bought Isaacson's biography were looking for tips on becoming masters of the universe or pretexts for rationalizing their own arrogance. And the stories Isaacson tells about Jobs' a*sholism are different from the ones that hagiographic biographers tell about Patton. They often demonstrate a capacity for irrationality, spitefulness, and petulance that had little to do with any psychological jujitsu: firing a manager in front of an auditorium of people; short-changing Steve Wozniak on a bonus in the early days of their partnership; taking credit for the ideas of others; screaming, crying, and threatening when the color of the vans ordered at NeXT didn't match the shade of white of the manufacturing facility; and launching savagely into anyone who aroused his displeasure. (I know of one person who says he quit his high-level job at Apple because he got tired of wiping Jobs' spittle off his glasses.) True, the Patton of historical fact was by most accounts even worse: a full-blown prick, sadist, and suck-up detested by both his superiors and his subordinates. But most of that has been left out of the

story that made Patton an epitome of brilliant leadership, whereas Jobs' pathological behavior is an essential element in his myth.

So it says something that Jobs' a*sholism hasn't been retouched for public consumption the way Patton's was. That has a lot to do with the anti-heroic temper of the times; we demand all the dirt, especially on our heroes. But it also suggests a different idea of what makes these a*shole achievers compelling, even to those with no interest in emulating them. Jobs' tantrums and rants don't evoke the resolute toughness of a Leader of Men so much as the temperament that we associate with creative genius. He styled himself as an artist rather than a businessman, the turtlenecked begetter of the cool exuded by the company's iStuff. That was a credible posture in an age in which people found it natural to compare the launch of the iPhone to the previous generation's Woodstock, and it seemed to license the prodigal shittiness that goes with being a Bernini, a Picasso or a Pound — or, for that matter, a Robert Plant. One reviewer of the Isaacson book compared reading it to "going backstage at a Led Zeppelin concert in the seventies and seeing your heroes wasted, and babbling like babies, surrounded by bimbos." Indeed, Jobs was a rock star, in a sense that Bill Gates couldn't possibly be, not just because he was idolized, but because he was one of those people like Jim Morrison, Kanye West and the Metallica guys, whose behavior as flaming a*sholes is taken as evidence of being exceptional enough to be able to get away with it.

Donald Trump comes closer than anyone else to being the archetype of the species; crossing genres, he exemplifies all the ways an a*shole can capture our attention. He's in a different league from Patton or Jobs, whose a*sholism is perceived relative to their other achievements — they'd be remembered even if they had been even-tempered and self-effacing, though perhaps not the subjects of a best-selling biography or an Oscar-winning biopic, whereas Trump would have no more claim on our attention than Harold Hamm, Charles Ergen, Dannine Avara or most of the other hundred-odd Americans who have more money than he does.

But Trump is a pure a*shole in a way that very few people are ever a pure anything, as one dimensional as the villain in a Batman movie. Everything he says reveals the workings of a hermetically self-referential mind. Here he is explaining his objections to gay marriage:

It's like in golf. A lot of people—I don't want this to sound trivial—but a lot of people are switching to these really long putters, very unattractive. It's weird. You see these great players with these really long putters, because they can't sink three-footers anymore. And, I hate it. I am a traditionalist. I have so many fabulous friends who happen to be gay, but I am a traditionalist.

Not even Stephen Colbert could have come up with that; whatever else can be said about Trump, he writes his own stuff. And controversial as he is in other regards, no one disputes that he's an a*shole, though people have very different reasons for finding that compelling. Some regard him with *de haut en bas* disdain. In its heyday in the 1980s, *Spy* magazine made a fetish of his arriviste coarseness with the recurrent epithet "short-fingered vulgarian" (in retrospect, the "Not our class, dear" condescension of that phrase is a reminder of how tricky it is to deride an a*shole from above). Others take pleasure in seething at his outrageousness. His presidential foray in early 2011, with its opportunistic rekindling of the birther dementia, briefly made him Topic A not just on the right but on the left—at the Huffington Post, mentions of Trump trail only those of Sarah Palin, who has been at the game much longer. At the time, even his online supporters conceded that he was an a*shole, though they either looked past it or saw it as a plus. To some it meant that he was someone who would get the job done, à la Patton; to others that he wouldn't mince words in letting the world know what an a*shole Barack Obama is:

I will vote for him. The guy might be an a*shole but the economy needs a fucking businessman at the helm.

I will vote for Trump, precisely because he is a jerk, but a jerk who knows when he's getting screwed on a deal, and will make sure it is America that comes out on top.

Trump may be an arrogant a*shole but he says what he thinks.

He says what so many ppl are thinking but is afraid to say it because of PC. trump is so fearless and does not give a dam about what ppl think about him. most ppl are afraid to speak their mind and say what they really believe because they will be called racist bigoted etc.

Trump's preeminence in this line testifies to his mastery of the mechanisms of publicity. Apart from Colbert, no one in public life understands better than he how engaging a*sholism can be, both in real life and in its broadcast simulacra. "The Apprentice" epitomizes the genre of reality television built around situations in which people can be abusive to others who have willingly consented to take part in return for money or celebrity. Every episode arcs towards a finale that gives the viewers the opportunity to watch a powerful man acting like an a*shole towards his supplicants, dispatching the losing competitor with a brisk, "You're fired." The phrase is supposed to evoke the pitilessness it takes to survive in "the ultimate jungle," but we don't actually feel much compassion for the losers. They've fought to get there, after all, and any residual sympathy we might have had for them is dissipated in the final boardroom scene where they're incited to act like a*sholes themselves, selling each other out in an effort to be spared the axe. And anyway, "fired" here really means "playing a subordinate role in the rest of this season's episodes." So there's none of the vicarious outrage we might feel watching a movie of the week that depicts Leona Helmsley summarily discharging a busboy who spilled some tea in her saucer.

Those scenarios are reproduced, with variations, across many of the genres of reality television, from "American Idol" to "What Not to Wear" to "Gordon Ramsay's Restaurant Makeover" (which offers, Gina Bellafante said in the *New York Times*, "the thrill of...witnessing someone so at peace with his own arrogance"). In each instance, the format keeps the "reality" close enough to the actual so that the a*shole's behavior is distressing to his targets without ever reaching so deep into their lives that it becomes genuinely disturbing to the viewer. They allow us to enjoy the spectacle of social aggression without experiencing any vicarious moral risk, in the same way that "dare" shows like "Fear Factor" allow us to watch contestants attempt to jump from one building to another without any real physical danger. On the contrary, our indignation over the behavior of the designated a*sholes on the job-search shows like "The Apprentice" and the documentary-style shows like those in the "Real Housewives" franchise isn't diminished by knowing how much of it is engineered by the producers or simulated for the camera. It's the same suspension of disbelief that makes possible the Comedy Central roasts, in which some celebrity, ideally a high-profile a*shole himself, winces good-humoredly as comedians who have never met him take turns making pointed put-downs at his expense. ("When Trump bangs a supermodel, he closes his eyes and imagines he's jerking off.") There have been eras that took a far more intense interest in spectacles of cruelty than ours, but none that was so transfixed by watching people act like a*sholes.

That fascination is fed in equal parts by our fantasies of rock star self-indulgence and the resentments and anxieties that a*sholes evoke. Both are popular themes in recent cinema. I'm not thinking so much of the innumerable comedies and dramas that feature a*sholes as their stock villains, but of movies in which the a*sholes are the focus of dramatic interest. Some of these are tales of a*shole redemption, like *Rain Man* and all those other Tom Cruise vehicles. Others are more equivocal about the condition, like *The Company of Men*, *The Politician*, *Greenberg*, *Margin Call*, and *Rules of Attraction*, as well as the mean-girl movies like *Heathers* and *Mean Girls* itself, which break new generic ground. Meanwhile, television has made a mini-industry of the dirtbag sitcoms that I mentioned earlier. And one should make a special place for "The Office," especially the original version with Ricky Gervais, which created one of the most incisive modern portraits of the a*shole's clueless self-delusion. Gervais' David Brent elicits contempt and irritation, pity, even affection — a sign not so much of the complexity of the character but of how conflicted we are about the type he personifies.

Some of these a*sholes are just old curs warmed over, but others are creatures new to film. *The Social Network*, for example, could have been subtitled *A*shole 2.0*. There are obvious resemblances between Mark Zuckerberg and Steve Jobs as driven high-tech creators, but the character of Zuckerberg created by Aaron Sorkin and David Fincher (which by all accounts is substantially different from the real Zuckerberg) belongs to a different genus of a*sholes. No one would be tempted to describe him as a "master of psychological manipulation," as *Newsweek* did Jobs; he's arrogant, self-absorbed, and insensitive to the point of near-autism. In the opening scene, he preens and condescends to his girlfriend, Erica, in a Cambridge bar ("You don't have to study... You go to BU [Boston University]"). She tells him he's an a*shole, breaks up with him, and walks out. As if to prove her right, he goes back to his dorm and posts some unflattering and sexist remarks about her on his blog, then, in a misogynistic follow-up, creates the "Facemash" application that allows people to rank the women students for hotness. Later we see him cutting out his best friend, who put up the money for the project, and responding with prodigal snottiness to a lawyer who's deposing him:

GAGE: You don't think I deserve your attention...

ZUCKERBERG: You have part of my attention. You have the minimum amount. The rest of my attention is back at the offices of Facebook, where my colleagues and I are doing things that no one in this room, including and especially your clients, are intellectually or creatively capable of doing.

Only in an incongruously mawkish final scene does Zuckerberg reveal a dim awareness of his isolation and loneliness, as he sits alone at a conference table in the offices of his lawyers and sends a Facebook friend request to his former girlfriend, Erica, then keeps compulsively refreshing the page to see if there's a response. All of a sudden he's pathetic, and for the first time strikes us as a possible object of sympathy. "You're not really an a*shole," his lawyer, Julie, has told him, but what the scene really shows is that he's *only* an a*shole, not an unmitigated shit like most of the other characters — the slick hustler Sean Parker, the supercilious and self-infatuated Winklevoss twins who accused him of stealing their idea.

That last scene put several critics in mind of Charles Foster Kane's "Rosebud," and it seems to set the movie in the long line of American stories that show successful figures repaid for their unchecked ambition with loneliness. The scene is obviously meant to leave the audience with the consoling thought that it profiteth a man nothing if he gains the world but loses his soul mate. But there are no real film antecedents for the figure of the emotionally stunted nerd billionaire (a very far cry from Mickey Rooney in *Young Tom Edison*), just as there are no media precursors of the digital culture that seems to many to foster a kindred sense of disconnection and casual meanness. Or at least that's the perception of many people in the generation of Sorkin and Fincher, who were in their late forties when the film was made. They obviously meant for their Zuckerberg to personify the digital culture, as they signaled in the ambiguous title *The Social Network*. That's how Zadie Smith read the story in the *New York Review of Books*.

Shouldn't we struggle against Facebook? Everything in it is reduced to the size of its founder... Poking, because that's what shy boys do to girls they are scared to talk to. Preoccupied with personal trivia, because Mark Zuckerberg thinks the exchange of personal trivia is what "friendship" is... We were going to live online. It was going to be extraordinary. Yet what kind of living is this? Step back from your Facebook Wall for a moment: Doesn't it, suddenly, look a little ridiculous? Your life in this format?

But that's not how people who grew up with Facebook see either Zuckerberg or his creation. When I talk to Berkeley undergraduates about the movie (which they've apparently all seen), they acknowledge that Zuckerberg behaved badly, but they don't see him as the alien and alienating figure that Sorkin and Fincher made him out to be — he's a routine sort of jerk, and if they have it in for him, it's more often because of Facebook's privacy policies than any of the wrongs committed by his movie avatar. Nor would they recognize either Facebook or themselves in Smith's description of the online world. They don't see their walls and profiles as the places where they live their lives, just as one of the many venues, material and immaterial, where they circulate. And they're quite clear on the difference between friends and "friends." As one student of mine wrote, after describing the assortment of postings on his Facebook wall from classmates, acquaintances, and already forgotten high-school chums, "If I thought this was a representation of my actual life, I'd need to reevaluate it pronto."

In the same way, digital natives aren't as disturbed as their parents are by the snark and a*sholism endemic in the online world, not because the perpetrators aren't a*sholes, but because they're relatively harmless ones. It's a curious feature of the age that the forms of a*sholism that people find most alarming tend to be those that have less drastic effects on their daily lives. Abusive blog comments are easier to ignore or shrug off than rude remarks from people behind you in the line at the DMV. But for just that reason, the more remote and impersonal forms of a*sholism are easier to engage in without rippling one's conscience too much. And while these activities don't generally inflict the personal injuries that a*sholism can at work or school, they can be enormously destructive of the fabric of public life.

20120815-13	15:08	Ben	Photos: Today's Lunch at Apple
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Another tasty meal of the kind I like as often as I can get it: fresh fish filet (seared, baked, sauteed, fried, poached, steamed, raw... whatever) with fresh veggies and accessories.

Today it was flawlessly seared fresh black grouper from the Gulf, with a (thankfully!) mild tarragon sauce. I do NOT agree with James Beards' proclamation that "you can't have too much tarragon". He can be famous all he wants, but to me, tarragon can easily be overpowering. My beautiful, perfect fish was laid gracefully across a robust red quinoa salad that had a notable inclusion of bits of cucumber, onion, and tomato; it was accompanied by a generous portion of roasted fresh peppered carrots. ("Try to kill me with the carrots, if you like", I said to my chef... and he did...) It's all gone now, of course, and all was quite delicious.

Susette and I made it safely through Faith's Gauntlet today (photo enclosed), even though it had several droolable new items and a revisit of the incredibly awesome mousse-like Bourbon Chocolate Cake. That 'cake', we now know, is really more like liquid chocolate in a gel state - almost a mousse, with enough air in it that it feels light, and looks almost like cake, but when forked, is much more like a mousse... and an easily discernible slug of Rebel Yell bourbon. But that was yesterday...)

Here's lunch. The little tuft of green atop each carrot is a Badge of Authenticity.



Seared Gulf Grouper over Red Quinoa Salad with Roasted Carrots



Faith's Gauntlet

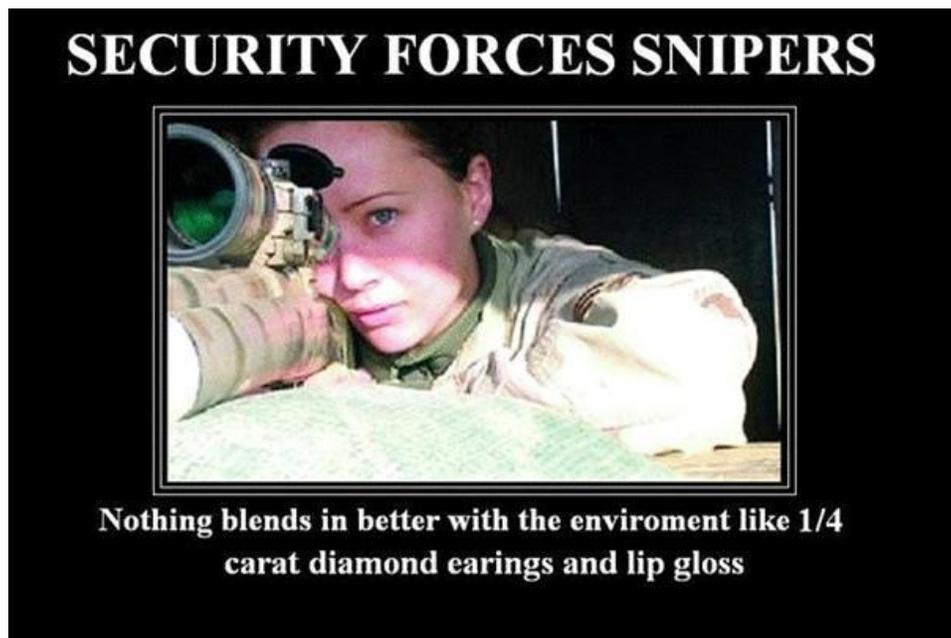


[I thought *this* was Faith's Gauntlet...? –SteveB]

[20120815-16](#) 18:25 Marci Fw: The Real Miss America

The Real Miss America

There's a Proud Papa out there somewhere.



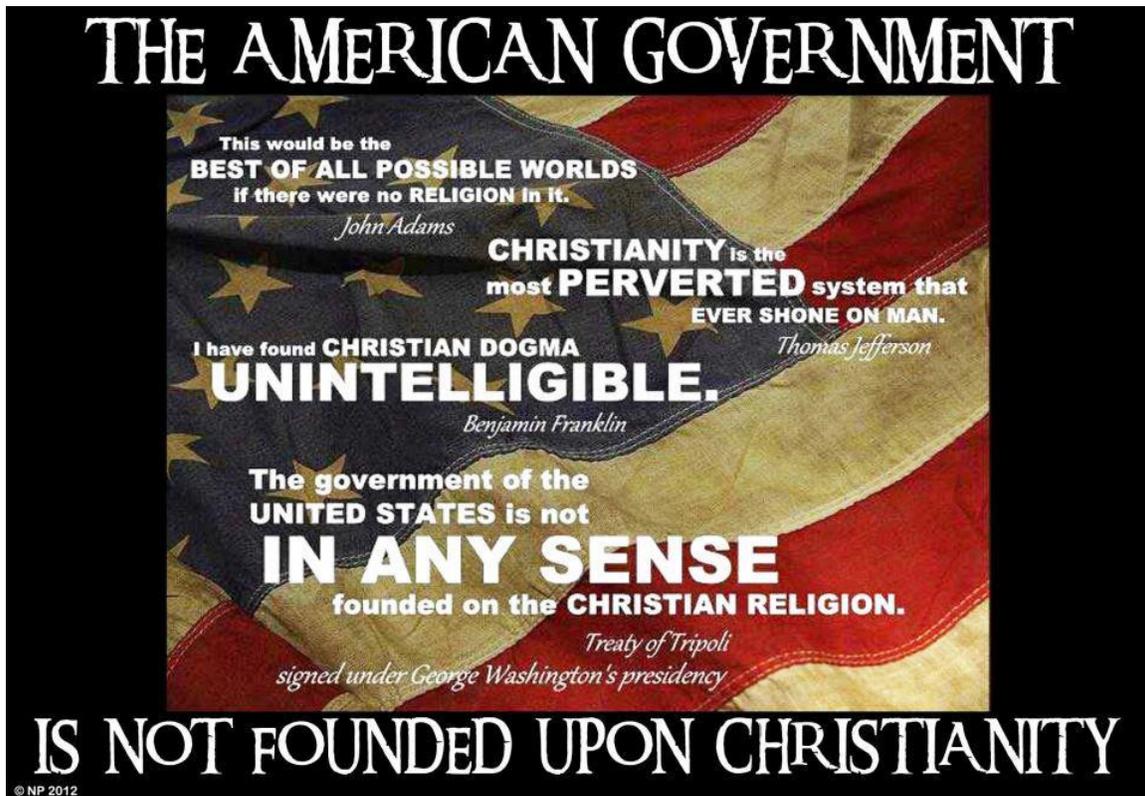
This 19 year old ex-cheerleader, now an Air Force Security Forces Sniper, was watching a road in Pakistan that led to a NATO military base when she observed a man digging by the road. She engaged the target (she shot him). It turned out he was a bomb maker for the Taliban, and he was burying an IED that was to be detonated when a U.S. patrol walked by 30 minutes later. It would have certainly killed and wounded several soldiers. The interesting fact of this story is the shot was measured at 725 yards.

She shot him as he was bent over burying the bomb. The shot went through his rectum and into the bomb which detonated; he was blown to pieces. The Air Force made a motivational poster of her. Folks, that's a shot 25 yards longer than seven football fields and the last thing that came out of his mouth... was his a*s!

If You Can Not Stand Behind Our Troops, Please Feel Free to Stand in Front of Them!!!!

I'd hold her ammo anytime.

20120815-18 23:58 SteveG Graphic: The American Government Is Not Founded upon Christianity



<http://jamestwhats.com/quartreemooon/?tag=small-indiana-town>



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

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FRIENDS OF THE MIDDLE NEWSLETTER #206 — AUG. 17, 2012

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

INDEX: Click here.

Creators to Suck Hind Teat in the U.S.

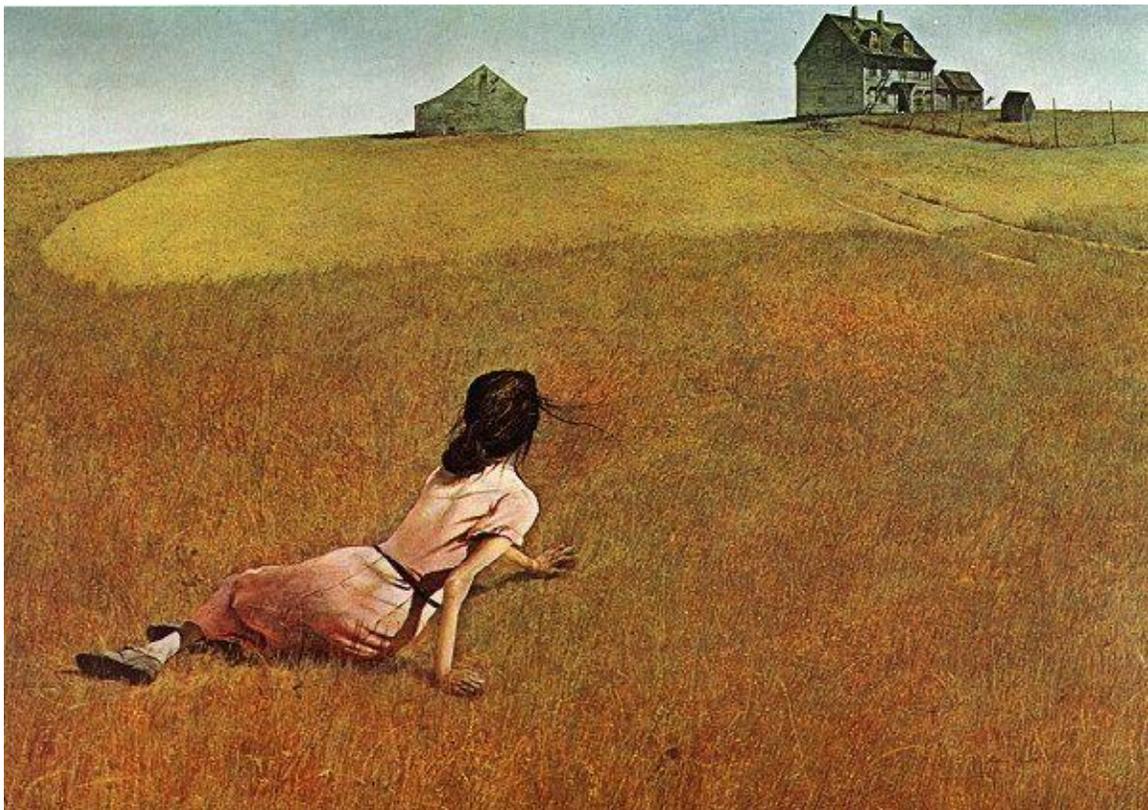
(posted by Steven W. Baker / SteveB, Aug. 17, 2012)

Mmmm...we can't afford to support the arts in the U.S., even though Third World countries can. The arts take entirely too many dollars away from the overseas coffers of the billionaires.

"Buenos Aires Supports Aging Writers" by Sarah Amandolare, Salon

Aug. 16, 2012, (http://www.salon.com/2012/08/16/buenos_aires_bettors_mitt/)

(As Mitt Romney discusses plans to cut arts spending, Buenos Aires unveils a special pension -- for the literati.)



Christina's World (Andrew Wyeth)

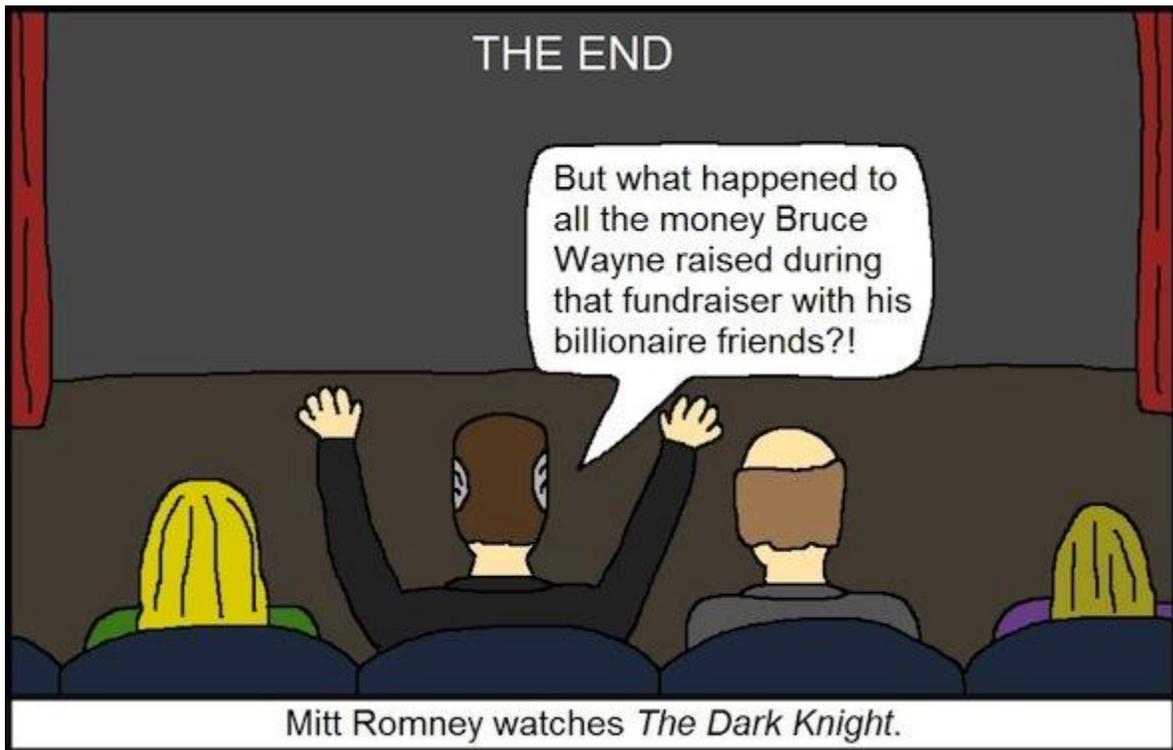
Arts and culture are on the fiscal chopping block in the U.S., but not in Buenos Aires. The New York Times reported that the literary city – *Granta* magazine recently included eight Argentines on its list of 22 best young Spanish-language novelists – has awarded pensions to at least 80 writers.

Monthly stipends can near \$900 and are intended to boost “often meager retirement income.” To qualify, writers must be 60 or older, have lived in Buenos Aires for 15 years, and written five or more books of fiction, poetry, plays or literary essays for established publishers. What’s more, independent publishers in Buenos Aires are eligible for subsidies and the city offers “tax exemptions on book purchases.”

The program was reported as Mitt Romney revealed to *Fortune Magazine* his plans for reduced spending, taking sharp aim at prominent cultural institutions.

“So first there are programs I would eliminate,” Romney told *Fortune*, before naming subsidies for PBS, the National Endowment for the Arts and the National Endowment for the Humanities. “I very much appreciate and like what they’re doing,” Romney said, “But I just think they have to stand on their own rather than receiving money borrowed from other countries, as our government does on their behalf.”

As the Huffington Post reported, the U.S. government gives \$444 million per year to PBS’s parent organization, the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, and \$146 million to the National Endowment of the Arts.



[20120816-01](#) 09:06 Susette Re: America Doesn't Like Mitt R0mney (reply to SteveB, FotM Newsletter #205)

Love it, SteveB.

[20120816-02](#) 11:19 Art Video: "One Term More"

Best political ad yet! Turn up the speakers. Even if you don't agree, if you like *Les Miserables*, you'll love this for originality alone. Oh, and it's not for sale, so that will limit its use to one party maybe.

http://www.onettermore.com/video_subtitles.html

20120816-03	11:29	SteveG	"Taxpayers Subsidize CEO Pay, Report Says"
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"Taxpayers Subsidize CEO Pay, Report Says" by Susanna Kim, ABC News

Aug. 16, 2012, (<http://news.yahoo.com/report-taxpayers-subsidize-ceo-pay-040124133--abc-news-deals.html>)

The Institute for Policy Studies, a self-described "progressive multi-issue think tank," analyzed the link between tax loopholes and excessive executive compensation and concluded that the loopholes created an "uneven playing field" between large companies and small businesses and led to lost tax revenue.

The latest edition of the institute's annual Executive Excess compensation study found that in 2011, 26 CEOs received more in compensation than their companies paid in taxes, and that the four major tax loopholes contributing to excessive executive pay cost taxpayers about \$14.4 billion a year.

"The report is timely at a time when the tax debate is so intense in this country," Sarah Anderson, the institute's global economy project director and the report's co-author, told ABC News. "Some leaders are saying we need to reduce the corporate tax burden even more while major companies are taking advantage of loopholes to lower their tax bill."

The report critiqued the major tax loopholes, including the preferential treatment of "carried interest" income for hedge fund managers. "Carried interest" income can be taxed as capital gains - at 15 percent tops - instead of at 35 percent, the top income tax rate. The Congressional Budget Office's projected estimate for "carried interest" income - revenue from investment income or dividends - for 2012 to 2021 was \$21.4 billion.

Companies can deduct executive pay as a business expense, just as they do inventory and appreciation. Because of a tax rule enacted in the early 1990s that limited the amount of cash that could be deducted to \$1 million, corporations have increasingly paid executives in stock options. Corporations can exempt stock option compensation, and other performance-based pay, from taxation.

William McBride, chief economist with the Tax Foundation, a conservative-leaning nonpartisan think tank, said this makes sense, because stock options are speculative compensation.

"They're worth nothing unless they're in the money," McBride told ABC News. "It wouldn't be fair to tax someone for getting paid an option that doesn't have any real value until it has been exercised."

Steven Balsam, an accounting professor at the Fox School of Business at Temple University and who published a study earlier this week for the Economic Policy Institute, "Taxes and Executive Compensation," said from a business viewpoint, "it's an expense, just like any other person's salary."

Others defend performance-based compensation for high-performing executives who have overseen companies with increasing earnings and stock prices.

Balsam said it was unlikely that boards would limit executive pay even if their pay was not tax deductible.

Anderson, who co-wrote the report, said that company boards that might choose to forfeit the deduction and continue paying high compensation packages "are stacked with executives from other firms that have a vested interest in maintaining the status quo.

"However, we need to keep chipping away at the myth that massive payouts are necessary to attract talented managers," she said. "Having a meaningful deductibility cap would send the right message, and at least taxpayers wouldn't have to continue to subsidize excessive pay."

The report points to the largest beneficiaries of the tax loopholes, saying they benefit the most from the unlimited tax deductibility of executive pay because their compensation has the largest proportion of deductible, performance-based pay.

Oracle's Larry Ellison, the sixth richest person in the world with a net worth of \$36 billion, according to Forbes, tops the list, and is followed by Discovery Communications' David Zaslav; Viacom's Philippe Dauman; Motorola Mobility Holdings' Sanjay Jha; and CBS Corp.'s Leslie Moonves.

Neither Oracle, Discovery Communications, Viacom and Motorola Mobility Holdings returned calls requesting comment. A spokeswoman for CBS Corp. and a spokeswoman for Discovery declined to comment.

20120816-04	13:05	SteveB	From the Right: "Why Liberals Behave the Way They Do"
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I don't really know how one person could have the truth so wrong. I guess this is just typical of the Republican "big lie" — they think that, to be effective, the lie has to be 100% the opposite of the truth. There is no going halfway for Ann Coulter, that's for sure. Every point can be easily refuted and shown to be in-line with the concept of the "big lie". For example: Democrats are condemned for being unscientific, after all their work to maintain scientific research in the federal budget, their work with climate and health scientists, etc., etc. (See Dr. Angell's quote, below, for a little different perspective.) Democrats. Unscientific! Critiqued by people who believe the Earth is only 6000-years-old so why worry about climate change! See? The exact opposite of the truth. (But I was happy to learn the author has so much concern for black people. LOL!)

In case you don't have time to wade through the entire article, here's an interesting example of hypocrisy for you (emphasis, mine). This is Ann Coulter's view of some alleged future liberal utopia:

The rest of us are forced to live in a lawless universe of no new pharmaceuticals, foreign doctors, gay marriage, girl soldiers, a health care system run by the post office, and bankrupt Social Security and Medicare systems, because **liberals can't enjoy their wealth unless other people are living in squalor.**

"Why Liberals Behave the Way They Do" by Ann Coulter, *Human Events*

Aug. 15, 2012, (<http://www.humanevents.com/2012/08/15/why-liberals-behave-the-way-they-do/>)

My smash best seller *Demonic: How the Liberal Mob Is Endangering America* has just come out in paperback — and not a moment too soon! Democrats always become especially mob-like during presidential election campaigns.

The "root cause" of the Democrats' wild allegations against Republicans, their fear of change, their slogans and insane metaphors, are all explained by mass psychology, diagnosed more than a century ago by the French psychologist Gustave Le Bon, on whose work much of my own book is based.

Le Bon's 1896 book, *The Crowd: A Study of the Popular Mind*, was carefully read by Adolf Hitler and Benito Mussolini in order to learn how to incite mobs. Our liberals could have been Le Bon's study subjects.

[Interesting that the author would return to the 19th Century for her "scientific" study of Democrats. —SteveB]

With the country drowning in debt and Medicare and Social Security on high-speed bullet trains to bankruptcy, the entire Democratic Party refuses to acknowledge mathematical facts. Instead, they incite the Democratic mob to hate Republicans by accusing them of wanting to kill old people.

According to a 2009 report — before Obama added another \$5 trillion to the national debt — Obama's own treasury secretary, Tim Geithner, stated that in less than 10 years, spending on major entitlement programs, plus interest payments on the national debt, would consume 92 cents of every dollar in federal revenue.

That means no money for an army, a navy, rockets, national parks, food inspectors, air traffic controllers, highways, and so on. Basically, the entire federal budget will be required just to pay for Medicare, Medicaid and Social Security — and the cost of borrowing money to pay for these programs.

When Social Security was enacted in 1935, the average lifespan was 61.7 years. Today, it's almost 79 and rising. But liberals believe the age at which people can begin collecting Social Security must never, ever be changed, even to save Social Security itself.

Mobs, according to Le Bon, have a "fetish-like respect" for tradition, except moral traditions because crowds are too impulsive to be moral. That's why liberals say our Constitution is a "living, breathing" document that sprouts rights to gay marriage and abortion, but the age at which Social Security and Medicare benefits kick in is written in stone.

Le Bon says that it is lucky "for the progress of civilization that the power of crowds only began to exist when the great discoveries of science and industry had already been effected." If "democracies possessed the power they wield today at the time of the invention of mechanical looms or of the introduction of steam-power and of railways, the realization of these inventions would have been impossible."

Liberals exhibit this exact groupthink fear of science not only toward light bulbs and nuclear power, but also toward medical inventions. Thus, when a majority of the country objected to Obamacare on the grounds that — among many other reasons — a government takeover of health care would destroy medical innovation, liberals stared in blank incomprehension.

They believe every drug, every diagnosis, every therapy, every cure that will ever be invented, has already been invented. Their job is to spread all the existing cures, while demonizing and stymieing pharmaceutical companies that make money by inventing new drugs.

Democrats haven't the slightest concern about who will formulate new remedies because they are enraged at profit making and suspicious of scientific advancement.

Apart from cures that will never be invented, liberal elites will be mostly untouched by the rotten medical care to which they are consigning the rest of us. Note how Democrats' friends, such as government unions, immediately received waivers from Obamacare. Rich or connected liberals, such as George Soros, Warren Buffett, Nancy Pelosi and Barack Obama, will always have access to the best doctors, just as Fidel Castro and Hugo Chavez do.

It is similar to the way that Democrats, who refuse to pass school choice, always seem to bypass the disastrous public schools for their own children, who end up at Sidwell Friends or St. Albans.

Democrats don't worry about how bankrupting Social Security and destroying the job market hurts black people, bitter divorcees and young people, because they can always demagogue these one-party Democratic voters simply by repeating that Republicans are racist, hate women and aren't cool like Obama.

The truth is irrelevant; only slogans and fear mongering delight mobs.

The rest of us are forced to live in a lawless universe of no new pharmaceuticals, foreign doctors, gay marriage, girl soldiers, a health care system run by the post office, and bankrupt Social Security and Medicare systems, because liberals can't enjoy their wealth unless other people are living in squalor.

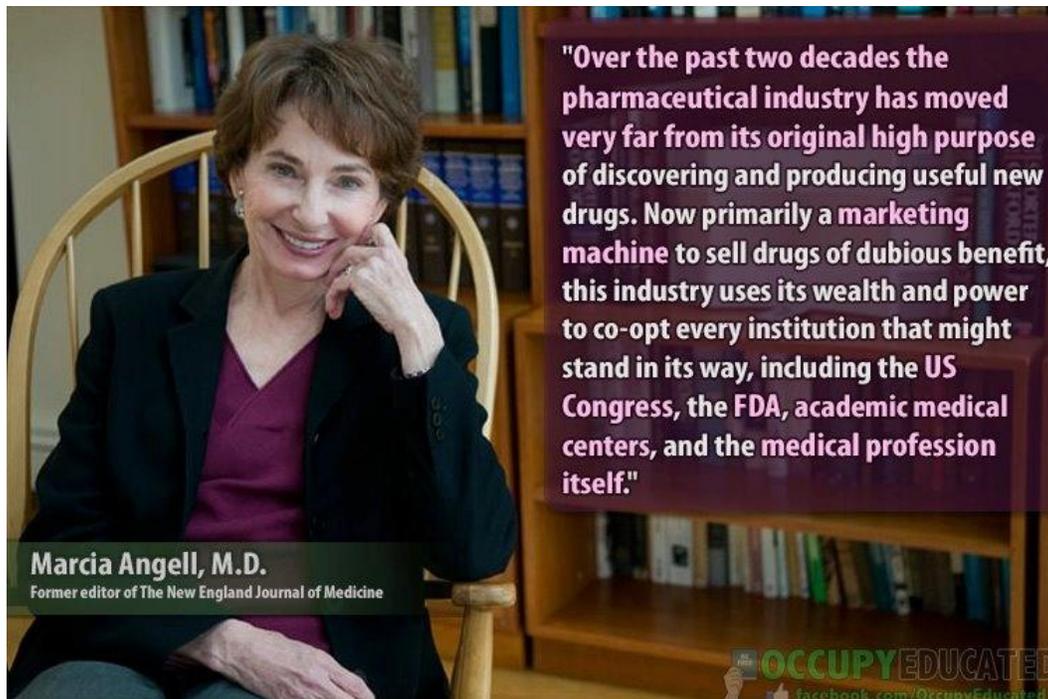
The country will have the economy of Uganda, but Democrats will be in total control.

20120816-19

23:58

SteveG

Quote: Dr. Marcia Angell on the Pharmaceutical Industry



20120816-15

18:11

SteveB

From the Right: "U.S. Chamber Calls Elizabeth Warren Greatest Threat to Free Enterprise"

Wow! Maybe Elizabeth Warren's not a L-A-D-Y! Holy cr*p! I love it!

"U.S. Chamber Calls Elizabeth Warren Greatest Threat to Free Enterprise" by Alison King, NECN

August 15, 2012, (<http://www.friendsoftheuschamber.com/blog/post/207/us-chamber-calls-elizabeth-warren-greatest-threat-to-free-enterprise>)

The U.S. Chamber of Commerce endorsed Mass. Sen. Scott Brown in his re-election campaign, and its political director attacked his Democratic challenger, Elizabeth Warren.

"No other candidate in 2012 represents a greater threat to free enterprise than Professor Warren," said Rob Engstrom, U.S. Chamber's political director.

Engstrom was in Boston to endorse Brown, but his words were more focused on Warren.

"Some of the comments she's made about throwing rocks at people who disagree with her is fundamentally unacceptable to the American business community," said Engstrom. **"She talks about blood and teeth on the floor - that's no way to lead."**

Warren supporters say this is not an endorsement from your local, hometown civic organization. The U.S. Chamber of Commerce, they say, represents big corporations and rich people working to weaken financial reforms.

But from the 100-year-old Harry Miller Textile Company in Boston's Roxbury neighborhood, Brown proudly embraced the support.

"It means a lot to get the endorsement from the world's largest pro-business organization that advocates for jobs, job creation and job growth throughout this country," said Brown.

Meanwhile, the Mass. Democratic Party released a web video saying that Brown was leaving the Boston event to head to a New York City fundraiser at the home of Mayor Michael Bloomberg - an independent who has been outspoken in his support of Wall Street.

Warren has also pointed to votes Brown took in July against extending the Bush tax cuts for those earning \$250,000 or less. Brown says he wants to extend the tax cuts for all income groups.

"America's working families are on the ropes and they can't take much more and ... the Romney Ryan Brown approach is a punch in the gut to them," said Warren.

[How can she say such an awful thing? -SteveB]

"I know that Professor Warren would love to run against Mitt Romney and Paul Ryan, but unfortunately she's running against me," said Brown.

[Is he maybe sort of trying to run away from the most unpopular governor in Massachusetts history? And the national debate is of no consequence? LOL! -SteveB]

20120816-05	14:05	SteveG	Fw: CREDO Action Petition: Tell Romney & Ryan to RSVP the Nuns!
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from CREDO Action:

Mitt Romney and Paul Ryan need to RSVP to the nuns.

"I'm not concerned about the very poor." That's what Republican Presidential candidate Mitt Romney said in a televised interview on CNN after he won the Florida primary.

And now he's doubled down on that sentiment by naming Paul Ryan, whose budget would give \$3 trillion in tax cuts to the richest Americans while drastically cutting food stamps for millions of poor Americans, to the Republican ticket.

Clearly, Romney and Ryan are dangerously out of touch. Thankfully, a group of righteous women who have dedicated their lives in service to the least among us have invited Mitt Romney and Paul Ryan to spend a day with them to learn about the struggles of some of our poorest citizens.

You may be familiar with "Nuns on the Bus," a group of courageous women who have been traveling to the Congressional districts that would be hardest hit by Paul Ryan's immoral Tea Party budget that gives money to the ultra-rich while stripping vital services from the poorest Americans.

Now the nuns are turning their attention to the Republican presidential and vice presidential candidates directly. But neither Romney nor Ryan has RSVPed to the nuns who have asked them to "spend a day with Catholic Sisters who work every day to meet the needs of struggling families in their communities."

In fact, the Romney-Ryan campaign hasn't responded at all to Sister Simone Campbell who issued the invitation on behalf of her Catholic sisters. If we can build more momentum for the "Nuns on a Bus" invitation to Mitt Romney and Paul Ryan, we can help them get a response from the campaign and bring more attention to the immoral dimensions of their heartless policies for the poor.

We'll deliver your signatures to the Romney-Ryan campaign and to Sister Simone Campbell so that the Catholic sisters can use our petitions to help further their fight for social justice.

Click below to sign the petition:

http://act.credoaction.com/campaign/romney_rsvp/?p=romney_rsvp.

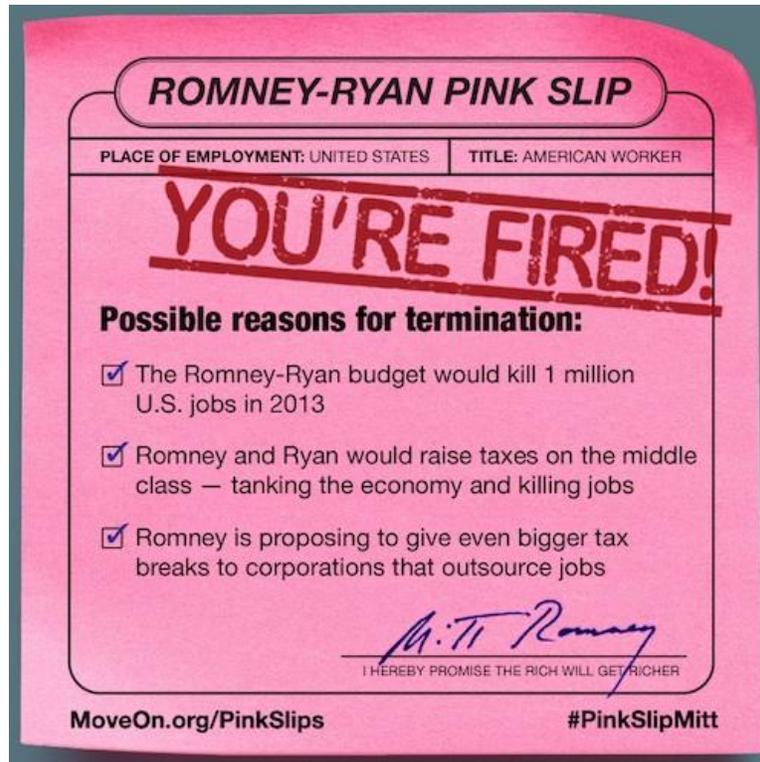
Thank you for standing with the nuns. Becky Bond, Political Director

[20120816-09](#) 16:50 SteveG Fw: MoveOn Action: Get Out the Romney-Ryan Pink Slip Message Today!

from MoveOn:

Right now, not enough voters know about the 1 million job losses we're facing under Romney-Ryan. Can you join us by sharing this pink slip message with your friends?

<http://pol.moveon.org/pinkslipmitt4/share.html>



[20120816-14](#) 19:38 SteveG Fw: Working America Survey: What Do You Think About Paul Ryan?!

from Working America:

The pick is in. Mitt Romney has chosen Rep. Paul Ryan of Wisconsin to be his running mate. Ryan is the author of the controversial budget that the U.S. House passed earlier this year—one which would radically change Medicare, Medicaid and tax rates for the rich. **What do you think about Paul Ryan's plan for America?**

As he hits the national campaign trail, working people need to know more about Ryan and what he plans for the country. For instance:

- Did you know that Ryan's budget would privatize Medicare, replacing the guarantee of coverage for retirees with a voucher to buy private insurance?
- Did you know that Ryan has supported privatizing Social Security?
- Did you know that Ryan would deregulate the big banks?

We'd like to hear what you think of Rep. Ryan and his agenda. Will you take our quick survey on Ryan and give us your input?

<http://workingamerica.org/Ryansurvey>

Thanks again for your support. Your voice matters.

In solidarity, Christian Norton, Working America

20120816-06 14:33 SteveBA Fw: Joke: Talk with Daughter

This gave me a good laugh.

A guy was telling his buddy, "You won't believe what happened last night..."

"My daughter walked into the living room and said, 'Dad, cancel my allowance immediately, forget the college tuition, rent my room out, throw all my clothes out the window; take my TV, and my laptop. Please take any of my jewelry to the Salvation Army or Cash Converters. Then sell my car, take my front door key away from me, and throw me out of the house. Then disown me and never talk to me again. And don't forget to write me out of your will and leave my share to anyone who wants it.'"

"Holy cr*p", replied the friend, "She actually said that?"

"Well, she didn't put it quite like that, she actually said... 'Dad, meet my new boyfriend, Mohammed. We're going to work together on President Obama's reelection campaign.'"

20120816-07 14:35 Art Re: The Real Miss America (reply to Marci, FotM Newsletter #205)

I thought you might find the following article about the Cheerleader Sniper from snopes.com interesting:

<http://www.snopes.com/photos/military/cheerleader.asp>.

20120816-08 14:39 Art Re: The Real Miss America (reply to SteveB, FotM Newsletter #205)

Good newsletter, but, as always, I am the wet blanket. The lady sniper story is not true. For starters, we don't shoot people in Pakistan, but she didn't shoot anyone in any Stan.

[Art is completely correct, though I really liked that a*s coming out of his mouth part. -SteveB]

20120816-10 16:55 Pam Pam's Update

If anyone cares, here's the latest. (Maybe that sounds snarky, and I don't mean it that way; I just don't assume other people have the same burning interest in my life that I do.)

Mark and I just returned from a two-week loop around New England, visiting my brother in upstate New York and culminating in four days in Lexington, MA, where my son David got married. I have no words to describe what that experience was like for me. Profound. Wonderful. Transformative. Beautiful. Amazing. Incredible. None of these words comes close, so I leave it to your imagination to picture a sunny day, a dazzling bride, and a groom with love dripping from every pore. It all boils down to love and family and being together at long last.

I look forward to returning to the political fray and FotM, even though I'm still reeling from the Ryan choice for VP and can't bear to think about what might lie ahead.

[20120816-11](#) 17:07 SteveB Re: Pam's Update (reply to Pam, above)

So great you're back and with such good news! And a wedding is maybe the best way to celebrate family...and with near perfect timing in this case, it seems to me.

Best wishes for the lucky couple are flowing out of Bolivia at this moment.

I'm thinking Romney really made a mistake with Ryan. I'm hopeful anyway.

Can't say much more right now. Our Snicker-Doodle tables and chairs are being delivered in just a few minutes, so got to be there.

[20120816-12](#) 17:34 Art Re: Pam's Update (reply to Pam, above)

We all missed you and we all care. Now get back to work.

[20120816-13](#) 19:35 Pam Re: Pam's Update (reply to Art & SteveB, above)

I just read a couple of articles on Obama--in *Harper's*, no less, that bastion of liberalism. I feel rather confused. I read one thing that calls Obama out for catering to the Republican agenda in hopes of getting concessions, which never come, and another that praises him for pulling us back from the brink. All I know for sure is, he's the lesser of two evils, and the other one (R,R) is too frightening to contemplate. All politicians speak in clouds of smoke, and I'm sick of their evasions. What's worse is the segment of the public that sees Obama as a socialist and Republicans as the rescuer of the little man. Ryan is a blinkered ideologue with the sympathies of a toadstool. Romney is a Mormon weirdo who talks out of both sides of his mouth. I can't stand any of it.

I read another great article by Atul Gawande in the *New Yorker* about our health care system and how lousy it actually is, especially in rural, southern areas. He lays out a plan that would do a lot to ameliorate things--modeled on an Iranian system, would you believe--but it requires lots of oversight and standardization. A sort of McMedicine, if you will. Doctors with egos will find it hard to swallow, but unless we change, we will, literally, die. You really ought to seek out this article, as it exposes a lot of the squirmy things that hide under the rock of "the greatest health care system in the world."

It's so depressing to me that we humans can't ever emerge from the mire of our own selfishness and greed. The few who try are always swamped by the ferocious ones who will stop at nothing to achieve whatever it is they want. I feel so lucky, personally. North Carolina isn't in a drought. Our supermarkets are full of delicious, healthy food, and I can afford \$3.60 per gallon for gas. Even more, finding David has brought an abundance of love into my life that I never dreamed of experiencing. I have discovered that it is possible to love wholeheartedly when a piece of you is no longer missing. Everything changes. So I am split down the middle. Part of me rejoices at the beauty and joy that is my life, while part of me despairs and fulminates. One thing I do know is that a sentient person can never be totally happy, merely grateful for a reprieve.

[20120816-16](#) 20:13 Ben Photo: Today's Lunch at Apple

It was yummy. You know how tasty fish skin (certain species, anyway) can be when it's paper-crisp-crunchy, a rich amber color, thin, and lightly seasoned? This wild steelhead filet had that. And the underlying filet was butter-soft, almost creamy, and delicately fork-flaky. Delicious! This was a bigger fish than the usual farmed variety, too, so the filet was thicker than one generally sees with trout. Chef Patricia's almandine sauce was fabulously rich; I'd

almost asked her to go light on it, then figured, well, I don't have to slurp it all down, do I? So I didn't, and I am glad I didn't, because it really highlighted the fish and rice perfectly!

The brown rice was properly *al dente* and played well with the other items on the nicely arranged plate. Broccoli may not be my favorite vegetable - mainly because it's difficult to manipulate while reading a book - but today's was a joy. (I suppose that when I am alone and reading, I'll just have to cut it all up before commencing the Feeding, as I did today!)



Seared Wild Steelhead Trout Almondine over Brown Rice with Broccolini

[No wonder the world's oceans are practically without fish! ;-) Looks delicious, as always, what a lucky lunch-eater you are. --SteveB

20120816-17 20:22 SteveG "The Big Lie of the Day: Republicans Balance Federal Budgets"

[If Republicans like balanced budgets, they should remember back to the historically rare surpluses of the Clinton Era/ They were produced by **a Democratic President and a Republican Congress WORKING TOGETHER IN COMPROMISE!** Oops! Guess Republicans don't want balanced budgets **THAT** badly! --SteveB]

"The Big Lie of the Day: Republicans Balance Federal Budgets" by @LOLGOP, *The National Memo*

Aug. 15, 2012, (<http://www.nationalmemo.com/the-big-lie-of-the-day-republicans-balance-federal-budgets/>)

The Lie: Republicans have a plan to balance the federal budget and care deeply about fiscal responsibility.

The Truth: The last Republican President who ever balanced the budget was Dwight Eisenhower.

Between 1998 and 2000, President Bill Clinton's Treasury Department paid off more than \$360 billion in debt. As a result of 115 straight months of economic expansion that began after an increase in the top income tax rate —

which was virulently opposed by the right — the huge deficits left by 12 years of Republican rule had been transformed into a surplus.

Within months after taking office in the narrowest victory of nearly any U.S. president—by only one vote in the Supreme Court—George W. Bush had begun to turn that surplus back into deficits that grew and grew, despite funding two wars on emergency supplemental bills that were not figured into the budget.

Vice-President Cheney laughed off the promises that the Bush tax breaks would pay for themselves and the budget would be balanced: “Reagan proved deficits don’t matter.” But deficits do matter to Republicans...whenever there is a Democratic president.

Since they woke up from a coma on the day President Obama was elected, Republicans have pushed two Big Lies: The President is responsible for the deficit, which is nearly entirely the result of Bush-era choices that the Republicans refused to abandon, and the deficit is responsible for the poor economy.

In both instances, the opposite is true.

Using the deficit as a battering ram, the GOP pushed for the rapid adoption of a Balanced Budget Amendment to the Constitution, which would ignore the true causes of the deficit—tax breaks, the wars and an unfunded Medicare expansion—and demand huge cuts to Medicaid, Pell Grants and every service the government provides.

Paul Ryan proposed a budget plan with these draconian measures yet impartial experts warn that his budget doesn’t balance for decades. The largest expenditure in the Ryan budget is interest on the national debt.

Eager to prove how conservative he is, Mitt Romney signed up for a balanced budget plan that works even faster than Ryan’s, by cutting even more government services. And he pledges to do it without asking rich Americans like himself to ever pay a nickel more in taxes.

Like the majority of Republicans in Congress, Romney has signed a pledge to never say aye to any new taxes. Forget asking the rich to contribute what they can. Under Romney’s plan they’ll pay even less. Of course, to do this Romney would have to demand that the working poor and the middle class pay up to \$2000 a year more to make the math work.

And when does Mitt Romney’s budget balance? Don’t ask Romney senior adviser Ed Gillespie (who also advised George W. Bush). Yesterday Gillespie told CNN’s Wolf Blitzer, “Uh...Wolf, I’m not sure of that myself, actually. I’ll get that to you though and I’m sure it’s on our website.” Don’t count on it.

Why? Romney purposely released a budget that can’t be scored, and thus makes no serious projections. No one can say he isn’t a Republican now!

Republicans have long abandoned any impulse to open a real discussion about the federal budget in hopes of distorting the debate. They’re attacking cuts that eliminate wasteful spending in Medicare, while proposing trillions in cuts that would do real damage. They’re blaming deficit spending for a bad economy that only deficit spending can help us to escape. They’re promising to balance the budget with Paul Ryan’s smile and the magic of trickle-down economics.

And how did that work out last time?

Oops. The Romney family makes a huge Freudian slip:



Okay, so it's fake, but it IS a brilliant use of Photoshop! It's not his family (his kids are grown) and here's the real photo:



<http://www.flickr.com/photos/dana8295/5978302474/>

Daybreak over Indiana (Dana Maddox)



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

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FRIENDS OF THE MIDDLE **NEWSLETTER #207 — AUG. 20, 2012**

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

INDEX: Click here.

Legitimately Stupid

(posted by Steven W. Baker / SteveB, Aug. 20, 2012)

Just in case you weren't sure what the Republican Party is all about...

"Todd Akin on Abortion: 'Legitimate Rape' Victims Have 'Ways to Try to Shut That Whole Thing Down'" (incl. video), by Chris Gentilviso, Huffington Post

Aug. 19, 2012, (http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/08/19/todd-akin-abortion-legitimate-rape_n_1807381.html)

**DEAR REPUBLICANS,
WE'LL STOP OUR ALLEGED
"WAR ON RELIGION", IF YOU
STOP YOUR WAR ON WOMEN,
WORKERS, UNIONS,
TEACHERS, TEXTBOOKS,
VOTING RIGHTS, MINORITIES,
SCIENCE, THE ENVIRONMENT,
THE SEPARATION OF CHURCH
AND STATE, THE POOR, THE
UNEMPLOYED, THE MIDDLE
CLASS, COMMON DECENCY
AND COMMON SENSE.**

OK?

W.A.

Rep. Todd Akin (R-Mo.) justified his extreme opposition to abortion by claiming that victims of "legitimate rape" rarely get pregnant.

In an interview with KTVI-TV on Sunday, the GOP Senate nominee was asked if he supported abortion in the case of rape.

"From what I understand from doctors, that's really rare," said Akin said of pregnancy caused by rape. "If it's a legitimate rape, the female body has ways to try to shut that whole thing down. But let's assume maybe that didn't work or something. I think there should be some punishment, but the punishment ought to be on the rapist."

Akin won a three-way primary on Aug. 7 for the rights to a November battle against incumbent Sen. Claire McCaskill (D-Mo.). McCaskill was "stunned" by Akin's Sunday comments:

As a woman & former prosecutor who handled 100s of rape cases,I'm stunned by Rep Akin's comments about victims this AM.

"It is beyond comprehension that someone can be so ignorant about the emotional and physical trauma brought on by rape," McCaskill added in a statement. "The ideas that Todd Akin has expressed about the serious crime of rape and the impact on its victims are offensive."

After Akin's primary win, McCaskill wasted little time in pouncing on his conservative record, calling the congressman "out of touch."

"We're going to prove to Missourians that Todd Akin is out of touch with their problems, out of touch with the pain that they feel, and out of touch with the views that they hold dear," she said back on Aug. 8.

Akin's comments on abortion and rape come less than two weeks after he suggested banning the morning-after pill.

"As far as I'm concerned, the morning-after pill is a form of abortion, and I think we just shouldn't have abortion in this country," he said in an Aug.8 interview with KCMO radio.

UPDATE: Akin's campaign released a statement Sunday on the issue, where the congressman admitted that he "misspoke" in the KTVI interview:

As a member of Congress, I believe that working to protect the most vulnerable in our society is one of my most important responsibilities, and that includes protecting both the unborn and victims of sexual assault. In reviewing my off-the-cuff remarks, it's clear that I misspoke in this interview and it does not reflect the deep empathy I hold for the thousands of women who are raped and abused every year. Those who perpetrate these crimes are the lowest of the low in our society and their victims will have no stronger advocate in the Senate to help ensure they have the justice they deserve.

I recognize that abortion, and particularly in the case of rape, is a very emotionally charged issue. But I believe deeply in the protection of all life and I do not believe that harming another innocent victim is the right course of action. I also recognize that there are those who, like my opponent, support abortion and I understand I may not have their support in this election.

But I also believe that this election is about a wide range of very important issues, starting with the economy and the type of country we will be leaving our children and grandchildren. We've had 42 straight months of unacceptably high unemployment, trillion-dollar deficits, and Democratic leaders in Washington who are focused on growing government, instead of jobs. That is my primary focus in this campaign and while there are those who want to distract from that, knowing they cannot defend the Democrats' failed economic record of the last four years, that will continue to be my focus in the months ahead.

["Paul Ryan Got Federal Funds to Help with Bush-Era GM Plant Closure He Blames on Obama" by Sam Stein, Huffington Post](#)

Aug. 17, 2012, (http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/08/17/paul-ryan-gm-federal-funds_n_1799515.html?utm_hp_ref=politics)

Rep. Paul Ryan, who tried to save a GM factory in Wisconsin that closed when George W. Bush was president, now blames the closure on President Barack Obama.

GOP vice presidential candidate Paul Ryan took a swipe at President Barack Obama on Thursday for failing to rescue a General Motors factory in his Wisconsin congressional district, calling it "one more broken promise" on the Democratic administration's record.

"I remember President Obama visiting it when he was first running, saying he'll keep that plant open," Ryan said during a campaign stop. "One of the reasons that plant got shut down was \$4 gasoline. You see, this costs jobs. The president's terrible energy policies are costing us jobs."

The attack has already received a fair amount of ridicule because the Janesville, Wis., plant actually closed during the last year of George W. Bush's presidency. What hasn't really been emphasized is whether Ryan clearly knew this and made the charge nonetheless.

According to a rudimentary LexisNexis search, Ryan made multiple public pleas to GM, including op-eds in his home state newspaper, to keep the plant open. He and fellow Wisconsin lawmakers went to the automobile company's headquarters to present plans to extend the plant's life. When the Bush administration itself called the decision to close the plant evidence that the auto industry was trimming fat and improving its bottom line, Ryan called the news "gut-wrenching."

And as it became clear in early-fall 2008 that GM wouldn't relent, Ryan publicly touted the federal tax money he secured to help displaced workers -- a use of funds that would seem at odds with his limited-government, fiscal conservative image.

The timeline is worth recounting now that it has popped up in Ryan's stump speech.

In April 29, 2008, it was announced that 750 workers at the GM plant in Janesville would lose their jobs. Ryan, according to the *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, said he would "work closely with those in Janesville facing uncertainty in the months ahead and do all that I can to ensure that they get the assistance they need."

On May 1, 2008, then-Sen. Russ Feingold (D-Wis.), along with Sen. Herb Kohl (D-Wis.) and Ryan, sent a letter to Rick Wagoner, then GM CEO, urging the company to join government, community organizations and employers to help the affected workers.

"We ask that you give every consideration to maintaining GM's presence in Janesville, as well as taking future steps to ensure the continued success of the Janesville plant, including considering the assignment of new production models at the plant," the lawmakers wrote.

On May 4, 2008, Ryan wrote an op-ed in the *Journal Sentinel* calling for a comprehensive energy plan in light of the news that the GM plant was firing 750 people.

"As a fifth-generation native of Janesville, I grew up learning the old saying, "As GM goes, so goes Janesville," Ryan wrote.

It was announced in early June that GM would indeed close the Janesville plant and three others. Ryan said it was "gut wrenching."

Later, he joined Feingold and Kohl in writing another letter to Wagoner. "On May 1 of this year, we wrote to you asking that GM take future steps to ensure the continued success of the Janesville plant, including considering the assignment of new production models at the plant. We renew that request now," the letter read.

On June 4, 2008, the Bush administration framed GM's decision as evidence the troubled automaker was getting its finances in order.

The Bush White House spokeswoman, Dana Perino, said it was "a sign that Detroit continues to adapt and evolve and address the change in consumer tastes and attitudes. ... They're adapting well and they'll make these changes and hopefully be able to pull themselves up out of what has been a rough several years."

Then-Sen. Obama, who had visited the Janesville plant in February, issued a statement.

"My heart goes out to the workers and families affected by the closing of these GM plants," he said. "Today's news is a painful reminder not only of the challenges America faces in our global economy, but of George Bush's failed economic policies." He finished by pledging to help domestic automakers "with the funding they need to retool their factories and make fuel-efficient and alternative-fuel cars. And we'll invest in efforts to make sure that the cars of the future are made where they always have been -- in the United States."

Ryan was quoted in a *Detroit News* article that day. "Growing up and living in Janesville, this is something we've always feared," the congressman said, calling the closure "a big psychological and economic blow to our community and our state; but Janesville will survive this, because we simply have to survive this."

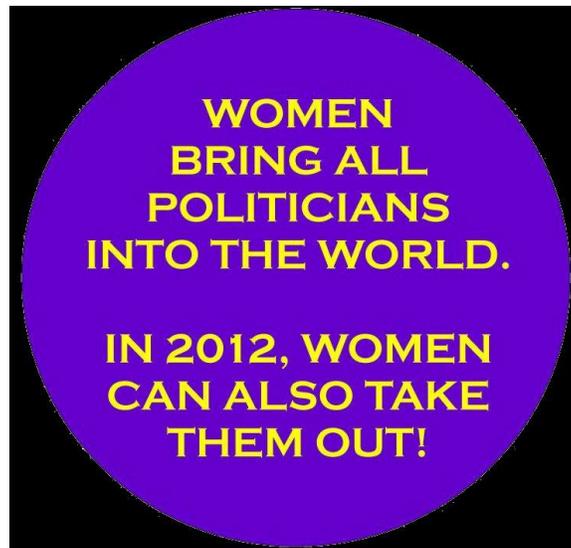
By September of 2008, Ryan, who supported the auto bailout so long as the funds didn't come from the financial sector bailout, was still working aggressively to get GM to change its mind. He, along with Feingold and Rep. Tammy Baldwin (D-Wis.), met with company officials in Detroit and "made clear what a tremendous asset the people of Janesville's GM plant are to GM, and how important GM jobs are to the Janesville community." On Sept. 13, 2008, the *Herald Times* Reporter said Ryan and then-Gov. Jim Doyle (D) had presented an "aggressive incentive plan" to GM leaders.

But by then, GM's shutdown plans were set. On Oct. 11, 2008, the *Journal Sentinel* reported that GM would announce it would close the Janesville plant around Christmas, "at least a year earlier than the company had initially projected."

Less than a month earlier, Ryan was making preparations to help the displaced workers and using federal funds to pick up the tab. On Sept. 18, 2008, his office put out a statement that it had joined forces with the U.S. Commerce Department's Economic Development Agency to secure a \$450,000 grant to support economic initiatives for the Janesville area.

"This has been a gut-wrenching summer for southern Wisconsin," Ryan said, "and today's announcement provides our community with much-needed support. I remain firmly optimistic that Janesville's best days are ahead."

On Oct. 2, 2008, Ryan announced that the U.S. Department of Labor had awarded a \$1.6 million national emergency grant to the Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development. The money would help "dislocated workers in Rock County's automotive industry, including workers at General Motors, Lear Corporation, Logistics Services Inc., and United Industries."



from Sen. Bernie Sanders:

In the 77 years since President Franklin Roosevelt signed Social Security into law on August 14, 1935, the retirement program has been one of the nation's most successful anti-poverty programs. Before Social Security existed, about half of America's senior citizens lived in poverty. Today, less than 10 percent live in poverty.

Today, Social Security not only provides retirement security but also enables millions of people with disabilities, and widows, widowers and children to live in dignity and security.

In these highly volatile economic times, when millions of Americans lost their life savings in the 2008 Wall Street crash, it is important to remember that since its inception, through good economic times and bad, Social Security has paid every penny owed to every eligible beneficiary.

Despite Wall Street and right-wing misinformation, Social Security, which is funded by the payroll tax, does not contribute to the deficit. In fact, the Social Security Trust Fund today, according to the Social Security Administration, has a \$2.7 trillion surplus and can pay 100 percent of all benefits owed to every eligible American for the next 21 years. Further, unlike the huge commissions paid out to Wall Street firms, Social Security is run with very modest administrative costs.

Despite Social Security's popularity and overwhelming success, we are now in the midst of a fierce and well-financed attack against Social Security. Pete Peterson, the Wall Street billionaire, has pledged \$1 billion of his resources to cut Social Security and other programs of enormous importance to the American people. Other billionaires and Wall Street representatives are also working hard to weaken or destroy Social Security and endanger the well-being of millions of Americans. We must not allow their effort to succeed.

Let us never forget that the current deficit of \$1 trillion was primarily caused by two unpaid-for wars and tax breaks for the rich. These policies were strongly supported by "deficit hawks." The deficit is also related to a major decline in revenue as a result of the Wall Street-created recession. The deficit is a serious issue, but we must not move toward deficit reduction on the backs of the elderly, the children, the sick and the poor. This would not only be immoral, it is bad economic policy. At a time when the wealthiest people in this country are doing phenomenally well and their effective tax rate is the lowest in decades, the top 1 percent must begin paying their fair share of taxes. At a time when large corporations are enjoying record-breaking profits, we have got to eliminate the huge corporate loopholes which result in a massive loss of federal revenue. At a time when we have tripled military spending since 1997, we must take a hard look at a bloated and wasteful Defense Department.

House Budget Committee Chairman Paul Ryan has been a proponent of privatizing the retirement program by putting seniors' savings into risky Wall Street investments. Even before tapping Ryan as his running mate, Republican presidential nominee Mitt Romney said he wants to begin the process of privatizing Social Security. He also would gradually increase the retirement age to 68 or 69. And he favors slowing the growth of benefits for persons with "higher incomes." Under a plan floated by Romney's allies on Capitol Hill -- Sens. Lindsey Graham (R-S.C.), Rand Paul (R-Ky.) and Mike Lee (R-Utah) -- someone making about \$45,000 a year today who retires in 2050 would receive 32 percent less in annual Social Security benefits than under the current formula. By that definition, the top 60 percent of all wage earners would be considered "higher income."

President Barack Obama, meanwhile, was a staunch defender of Social Security in his 2008 campaign. So far this year, however, Obama has refused to stand behind his four-year-old opposition to cuts. In fact, the president has signaled that he may be open to lowering benefits by changing how they are calculated. In my view, it is long past time that the president told the American people in no uncertain terms, as he did in 2008, that he will not cut Social Security on his watch.

To keep Social Security's finances sound in the future I have introduced legislation -- identical to a proposal that Obama advocated in 2008 -- to apply the payroll tax on incomes above \$250,000 a year. Under current law, only earnings up to \$110,100 are taxed. The Center for Economic Policy and Research has estimated that applying the

Social Security payroll tax on income above \$250,000 would only impact the wealthiest 1.4 percent of wage earners.

Those who want to cut Social Security benefits are looking at a number of proposals. One of the most talked about ideas is moving toward a so-called "chained-CPI," which would not only impact seniors, but also military retirees and those who receive benefits from the Department of Veterans Affairs. The "chained-CPI" approach changes how the Consumer Price Index is calculated, so that a person 65 years old today would earn \$560 a year less in Social Security benefits once they turn 75. Benefits would be cut by nearly \$1,000 a year once they turn 85. Instead, I have proposed legislation to base Social Security cost-of-living adjustments on a Consumer Price Index for the Elderly, a measure that would increase benefits because it would take into account the real-life impact of rising health care costs and prescription drug expenses paid by seniors.

While we often take Social Security for granted, we must not forget that Social Security today is providing dignity and security to tens of millions of Americans. It is a program that is working and working well. We must stand up today, on the 77th anniversary of this enormously important program. We must pledge to continue the fight against the right-wing Republicans, some Democrats and their wealthy backers who want to destroy the program.

Thank you for all that you do.

Sincerely, Senator Bernie Sanders

Contribute:

<https://services.myngp.com/ngponlineservices/contribution.aspx?X=O38xUCC6cZGMCzykoyZBBDEu3ipe1B7SZQNYC%2bODF5o%3d>

20120817-02 09:46 SteveG Re: Joke: Talk with Daughter (reply to SteveBA, FotM newsletter #206)

Nice side splitter from SteveBA – always nice to get a good laugh out of slamming someone's religion.

20120817-03 09:55 Pam Photo: My Son, David

I can't remember if I sent this to FotM or not. If I didn't, here it is, and you are free to publish it. Isn't he handsome!?



[:-) I have to agree. –SteveB]

20120817-04 11:28 SteveB Fw: MoveOn Video: "Revealed: The GOP Strategy"

from MoveOn.org:

Video: "Revealed: The GOP Strategy" by karinmoveon

Aug 13, 2012, (http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=a0ccPh3YYH4)

This Video MIGHT Stop Romney from Becoming President

Is the GOP employing a racist strategy to get Mitt Romney into the White House? Watch this video to find out.

Mitt Romney could win. Don't believe it?

Well, you're not alone. Most people don't understand that the GOP has an incredibly upsetting plan in place to put Mitt Romney in the White House—a plan that, frankly, is working.

This video spells it out for you—a three pronged GOP strategy that includes a little-known, shocking, and racist strategy designed to help Romney win. Watching and sharing it might be the most important thing you do to defeat Romney in this election.

If we understand what we're fighting against, we CAN mobilize and fight back. People power works—MoveOn members have proven it time and time again.

Please watch this video and get in the game by sharing it with your Facebook and social networks.

Thank you for all you do. –Justin, Mark, Victoria, Tate, and the rest of the team

20120817-05 14:21 SteveG "Obama Better for World Economy: Poll"

Interesting poll...

"Obama Better for World Economy: Poll" by Andy Bruce, Reuters/Yahoo! News

Aug. 17, 2012, (<http://news.yahoo.com/executives-obama-better-world-economy-poll-092717460--business.html>)

(LONDON) **Twice as many business executives around the world say the global economy will prosper better if incumbent President Barack Obama wins the next election than if his Republican challenger Mitt Romney does, a poll showed on Friday.**

Democrat Obama was chosen by 42.7 percent in the 1,700 respondent poll, compared with 20.5 percent for Romney. The rest said "neither".

The result was different among respondents in the United States, where a slim majority thought Romney would be better for their businesses than Obama.

Obama maintains a seven-point lead over Romney among registered voters in the race for the November 6 presidential election, despite the fact Americans are increasingly pessimistic about the future, according to a Reuters/Ipsos poll conducted last week.

The FT poll was conducted before Romney picked Wisconsin Congressman Paul Ryan as his vice presidential running mate at the weekend, a move that could dramatically shift the election debate between two sharply contrasting views of government spending and debt.

Romney's choice for running mate gave him no immediate boost to his White House prospects, a Reuters/Ipsos poll suggested on Monday.

20120817-06 15:06 SteveG "Paul Ryan's Skeleton in the Closet"

"Paul Ryan's Skeleton in the Closet" by Gary Weiss, The Street

Aug. 13, 2012, (http://www.thestreet.com/story/11661708/1/paul-ryans-skeleton-in-the-closet.html?cm_ver=GOOGLN)

(NEW YORK) Paul Ryan is either a chameleon, a flip-flopper or a liar. There is no third alternative. I vote "liar."

I'm really staggered by the media's softball handling of what is going to become known in the waning months of this campaign as **Mitt Romney's Ayn Rand Problem**.

For years, his newly minted running mate has championed Rand, a Russian-born author chiefly known for her novels *Atlas Shrugged* and *The Fountainhead*. In those books and in essays, speeches and interviews, Rand celebrated greed and selfishness, rejected Judeo-Christian morality, and set forth an alien vision of a nearly government-free America that would be ruled by its industrialists and bankers -- an untaxed super-rich elite. She was a strident atheist.

Then, in April, Ryan had an apparent change of heart. He gave an interview to the *National Review* in which he disavowed Rand entirely. Ryan said that, yes, like a lot of people he'd read Rand as a youth, but he certainly was not an adherent to her philosophy.

"I, like millions of young people in America, read Rand's novels when I was young. I enjoyed them," Ryan told the *National Review*. That got him interested in the Chicago School of economics and in Milton Friedman. "But it's a big stretch to suggest that a person is therefore an Objectivist."

The *National Review* went on thusly: " 'I reject her philosophy,' Ryan says firmly. 'It's an atheist philosophy. It reduces human interactions down to mere contracts and it is antithetical to my worldview. If somebody is going to try to paste a person's view on epistemology to me, then give me Thomas Aquinas,' who believed that man needs divine help in the pursuit of knowledge. 'Don't give me Ayn Rand.'"

There's nothing more unsavory than smearing somebody because of views he held years ago. I remember how teed-off my parents were back in the 1960s, when the Democratic boss of the Bronx, Congressman Charles Buckley, smeared his Reform Democrat challenger Jonathan Bingham as an anti-Semite because he was a youthful member of the isolationist America First Committee. Yes, he was, but that was years ago and his views had changed. Buckley was voted out and Bingham became the congressman in a largely Jewish district.

"These Rand-related slams, Ryan says, are inaccurate and part of an effort on the left to paint him as a cold-hearted Objectivist," said the magazine's Robert Costa, who quoted Ryan as saying, "You know you've arrived in politics when you have an urban legend about you, and this one is mine."

If Ryan is getting a bad rap as a Randian, then he is definitely a victim of an injustice. But Ryan didn't have a brief flirtation with this atheistic, amoral -- but highly appealing -- philosophy as a youth. He was a full-fledged Randian as a Congressman. He didn't change his views. He is lying about them.

In 2005, he gave a speech to the Atlas Society, an organization devoted to the promulgation of Rand's views. A tape recorder was running. An audio file of his speech can be accessed here. It's important to listen to the entire tape, which runs about 20 minutes, to understand the full depths of Ryan's dishonesty.

I grew up reading Ayn Rand and it taught me quite a bit about who I am and what my value systems are and what my beliefs are. It's inspired me so much that it's required reading in my office for all my interns and my staff.

The reason I got involved in public service, by and large, if I had to credit one thinker, one person, it would be Ayn Rand. And the fight we are in here, make no mistake about it, is a fight of individualism versus collectivism.

When you look at the 20th century experiment with collectivism that Ayn Rand more than anybody else did such a good job of articulating, the pitfalls of statism and collectivism, you can't find a thinker or writer who did a better job of describing and laying out the moral case for capitalism than Ayn Rand.

He went on and on like that, speaking like the strident Objectivist that he is, invoking Rand hero John Galt and the "money speech" in *Atlas Shrugged*, beloved by all Rand followers, given by the dissolute playboy (but covert government-hating revolutionary) Francisco d'Anconia: "It's so important that we go back to our roots to look at Ayn Rand's vision, her writings, to see what our girding, under-grounding principles are. I always go back to, you know, Francisco d'Anconia's speech ... on money when I think about monetary policy," Ryan said.

Ryan said that he would go back to Galt and d'Anconia and "a lot of other things that she did, to try and make sure that I could check my premises, so that I know that what I'm believing and doing and advancing are square with the key principles of individualism."

"Check your premises" is a Randian slogan, predicated on the belief that all us bad-thinking non-Randians are shaping our belief systems on poor assumptions. If we understood the fallacious premises behind our beliefs, we'd be card-carrying Objectivists. Use of this rote catchphrase by Ryan shows how wedded he is to her philosophy and worldview.

Sure, it's possible that Ryan had a sudden change of heart since 2005. But the chances of that are reduced to nearly zero by his claim that he is the victim of an "urban legend." This is a man running away from his past, not candidly acknowledging it and saying that he has changed his views, as Bingham did. The people of the Bronx forgave him. Ryan, apparently, feels that's not an option, and clearly expects that he'll be able to lie about his Ayn Rand philosophy and get away with it.

Now, to be fair, not all followers of Objectivism necessarily buy all of her views. Ryan is a strident opponent of abortion, and Rand was militantly in favor of a woman's right to choose. In fact, Ryan is an extremist on the subject. They may differ in other areas. But all one has to do is read through his mind-blowing budget plan, which would shift the burden of budget-cutting to the poor and middle class -- while totally exempting the rich from any sacrifice -- to know that Ayn Rand continues to dominate Paul Ryan's worldview. The strident, Rand-quoting Paul Ryan of 2005 is very much the same Paul Ryan who is running for vice president today.

So let's call a spade a spade. When Paul Ryan distances himself from Ayn Rand, he's not obfuscating. He's not flip-flopping. He's not being a chameleon, trying to appeal to a wider national audience, one that might be put off by Rand's atheism, by concealing his true views. He's lying.

(Gary Weiss's most recent book is *Ayn Rand Nation: The Hidden Struggle for America's Soul*, published by St. Martin's Press.)

20120817-07	15:46	SteveG	"Ryan Is a 'Dream Come True' for Health Insurance Industry"
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"Ryan Is a 'Dream Come True' for Health Insurance Industry" by Wendell Potter, MSN

Aug. 14, 2012, (<http://leanforward.msnbc.com/news/2012/08/14/13277101-wendell-potter-ryan-is-a-dream-come-true-for-health-insurance-industry?lite>)

As someone who worked nearly two decades as a health insurance executive, I know that Mitt Romney's selection of Rep. Paul Ryan as his running-mate is a dream come true for my former colleagues—and a potential nightmare for just about everyone else in America under the age of 55.

For years, the insurance industry has contributed generously to candidates who want to hand over the Medicare program to private insurance companies. That's exactly what Ryan's so-called "Path to Prosperity" would do. It would end the Medicare program as it has existed for almost half a century—a program that guarantees access to affordable care for senior citizens—and replace it with a scheme in which beneficiaries would be given "premium support" to help them buy coverage on the private market. Yes, the traditional Medicare program would continue to be a choice under the 2012 version of Ryan's plan, but it would have to compete with private insurance companies. And because, under Ryan's plan, insurers would be able to cherry-pick the healthiest seniors, the traditional Medicare program would likely be unable to survive over the long haul. Perhaps it should come as no surprise that **Ryan's wife is a former lobbyist for the health insurance industry.**

As the head of corporate communications for Cigna—charged, among other tasks, with disseminating financial information to the news media—I came to understand the lengths insurers routinely go to to satisfy shareholders and analysts. During congressional testimony in 2009, I explained how they make promises they have no intention of keeping, how they flout regulations designed to protect consumers, and how they make it nearly impossible to understand—or even obtain—information consumers need. I described how the big for-profit insurance corporations, in their quest to meet Wall Street's profit expectations, often cancel the coverage of policyholders who get sick and how they implement "medical management" practices that often result in policyholders being denied coverage for care their doctors recommend.

The Affordable Care Act outlaws many of the most egregious practices of the insurance industry, such as refusing to sell coverage to people with preexisting conditions and charging older people many times more than what they charge younger people for the same coverage. Ryan proposes not only to privatize Medicare but also to scrap those consumer protections, by repealing the reform law.

Of course, Mitt Romney is trying to muddy the issue. On the day he announced Ryan as his running mate, Romney accused President Obama of using the reform law to cut \$700 billion from the Medicare program. That's not true. In reality, that figure is what the Congressional Budget Office estimates will be saved over the next several years as a result of changes in the way Medicare pays doctors, hospitals and drug companies—changes that doctors, hospitals and drug companies endorsed.

They endorsed it because they understand the importance of providing coverage to the millions of people who are currently uninsured. The uninsured all too often show up at the emergency room to get care when they get sick or injured, and all too often they can't pay their bills. Hospitals call this uncompensated care, but somebody has to pay for it, and that somebody is everybody with private insurance. Family premiums now cost more than \$1,000 extra to help cover that uncompensated care. That's what cost shifting is all about.

Romney's misleading talking point about that \$700 billion reminded me of the work my former colleagues in the insurance industry and I used to do to scare people into believing things that were not true, such as calling the Affordable Care Act a "government takeover of health care." It wasn't hard to get our friends in politics and the media to take our spin and run with it.

And given what a boon Ryan's plan would be for the industry, it looks like health insurers just got a very well-placed friend indeed.

20120817-08	21:44	SteveG	Where is Boehner?
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Where is Boehner?

20120818-01	05:48	SteveB	Re: Where is Boehner? (reply to SteveG, above)
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Why do you ask, Steve? I guess I hadn't noticed he's missing...

[20120818-02](#) 06:14 SteveG Re: Where is Boehner? (reply to SteveB, above)

I guess we don't ask anyone, he wasn't adding much to the dialogue or scenery. Just an old playmate. Do sort of miss his golden, I mean orange, complexion.

[20120818-04](#) 07:47 SteveB Re: Where is Boehner? (reply to SteveG, above)

You're thinking he's not happy with the Ryan pick? And maybe not so much with Mitt either?

I hear the House is now in play...

[20120818-07](#) 09:50 Art Re: Where is Boehner? (reply to SteveG & SteveB, above)

If you were Speaker of the House with an approval rating of below 10% wouldn't you be laying low?

[20120818-03](#) 07:17 SteveB "Mitt Romney's 2010 Tax Disclosure May Be Lacking 'Unrelated Business' Form"

Is Mitt paying his fair share or ripping the rest of us off???

What might be perfectly legal, might be seen as mighty unseemly in a Presidential candidate...

I also happen to believe, as a matter of faith, I guess, that the more blatant and cynical the lies, the least likely the Presidency. Sorry, Mitt, I think and hope that's the way the majority of the electorate is, despite the loud right fringe.

"Mitt Romney's 2010 Tax Disclosure May Be Lacking 'Unrelated Business' Form" by Jason Cherkis, Huffington Post

Aug. 17, 2012 (http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/08/17/mitt-romney-2010-tax-unrelated-business_n_1798152.html?utm_hp_ref=politics&utm_hp_ref=politics)

(WASHINGTON) Presidential candidate Mitt Romney's tax returns may be more incomplete in their public release than was previously thought. Filings related to Romney's individual retirement account, already subject to press scrutiny, indicate that the presumptive GOP nominee should have filed a form accounting for unrelated business income taxes.

The unrelated business income tax is set up for tax-exempts like nonprofits and IRAs that engage in commercial activity. Not filing the form, known as a 990-T, may indicate that Romney's IRA funds are held by an offshore account in order to shield them from taxation.

Romney campaign spokesperson Andrea Saul did not return multiple requests for the 990-T form, nor did she answer repeated questions related to the matter.

From what Romney has disclosed, there is mounting circumstantial evidence that the IRA may hold offshore investments through what are known as "blocker corporations," which help him avoid paying taxes. Senator Max Baucus (D-Mont.) told *The New York Times*, "From what I have read about Governor Romney's tax returns, I think it raises very serious questions."

"We know Romney's IRA has Bain funds in it," explained Rebecca J. Wilkins, senior counsel for federal tax policy with the nonpartisan Citizens for Tax Justice. "Bain private equity funds are listed in those assets and those funds are located in the Cayman Islands."

Wilkins says that if Romney's IRA held those funds directly, instead of through a blocker corporation, a 990-T should have been filed. "Typically it doesn't even have to file a tax return," Wilkins says. "But if it has unrelated business income, then it has to pay the unrelated business income tax." And a 990-T would need to have been filed.

HuffPost previously uncovered another document that likely should have been filed among Romney's 2010 tax returns, which would have provided more details on his overseas bank holdings. Such a form has yet to be released by the Romney campaign.

The offshore tax avoidance could be huge. HuffPost recently reported that the candidate has between \$20.7 million and \$101.6 million in his IRA -- well above the average IRA value of \$67,438 in 2010.

Vanity Fair raised the issue in its piece on Romney's offshore accounts:

Romney's I.R.A. also appears to have invested in so-called blocker corporations in the Cayman Islands and elsewhere. U.S. pension funds, foundations, and even I.R.A.'s routinely use offshore blocker corporations to avoid something called the Unrelated Business Income Tax, which was designed to keep nonprofits from competing with ordinary companies in areas outside their core purpose: if you invest directly you get hit with the tax, but if you invest in a blocker, which then invests in the U.S. business, you escape it. Romney's I.R.A. appears to have employed this lawful escape route, and his campaign has used language suggesting that it has. But that would mean the Romney camp's claim that Mitt's tax consequences of investing via the Cayman Islands is 'the very same' as it would have been had he invested directly at home is simply not true.

If Romney had been operating a nonprofit, his use of the offshoring loophole would be similar to the sort of activities Sen. Chuck Grassley (R-Iowa) has long sought to shut down. The senator has made similar tax avoidances a priority since 2007.

Two years ago, Grassley and colleagues in the Senate were stunned to learn that the Boys and Girls Club of America held more than \$50 million in offshore accounts and funds, including some held in the Cayman Islands. The organization had to admit that it had used the Caymans to avoid paying the unrelated business income tax.

Grassley's proposed legislation to close the loophole has yet to come up for a vote.

Jill Kozeny, a Grassley spokesperson, told HuffPost that the the senator is not focused on IRAs that may employ offshoring. "This focus hasn't been on unlikely UBIT avoidance by pension funds, IRAs, or other tax-deferred retirement accounts since those funds and accounts are generally not using debt, such as tax-exempt bonds or real estate mortgages, to finance investments, which is what usually triggers UBIT for charities," she said via email.

Wilkins of Citizens for Tax Justice believes the loophole should be closed for IRAs. "Clearly it's an unintended loophole in the tax code," she says. "The reason they are making these investments offshore is to avoid paying the unrelated business tax."

20120818-05	08:00	SteveB	'The Scam' in a Nutshell
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Here's 'The Scam' in a Nutshell

For more than four years, the Republicans have been calling President Obama a socialist—head of the biggest “Nanny State” ever, giving welfare and food stamps to everyone, running up the national debt and wanting to bankrupt the country.

Through years of speeches, campaigns, press conferences, etc., Americas have also pretty much been educated by Republicans that Republicans are dead-set against:

1. Billionaires paying their fair share of taxes.
2. Anything even minimally resembling universal health care, like Romneycare or Obamacare.
3. Public assistance of almost any kind (people are just lazy, right?).
4. American workers (maybe they're just lazy too?).
5. Women.
6. Minorities.
7. Public education, in many (most?) cases.
8. Anyone not extremely rich or extremely stupid.
9. Social Security/Medicare/Medicaid.

I mean, this is the very Party that, through its V.P. candidate, Paul Ryan, has proposed dismantling the entire safety net!

Now, suddenly, we're supposed to believe that Republicans Mitt R0mney and Paul Ryan are more likely to find a way to preserve these extremely popular programs—Social Security/Medicare/Medicaid—than the socialist radical Obama and the Democrats!

I'm sorry, but doesn't this strain the credibility of even the most devoutly dogmatic Republicans???

The public ain't gonna buy it and that's what the polls show—basically, fear of what Republicans might do if given more power...

Please tell me how I'm wrong.

[20120818-06](#) 08:31 Beth Re: The 'Scam' in a Nutshell (reply to SteveB, above)

You are so right!

[20120818-10](#) 11:08 Pam Re: The 'Scam' in a Nutshell (reply to SteveB & Beth, above)

Reckless Endangerment is the title of a book I'm reading about the collapse of the global economy, including the debacle of 2008--10. It's by Gretchen Morgenson and Joshua Rosner. I'm only about a third of the way through, but it's blowing my mind. I knew things were bad but I didn't how bad and exactly who was responsible. I'm finding out. Morgenson names names, cites statistics, and essentially leaves no stone unturned. A handful of people, it would seem, were greedy and, to be kind, self-deluded. The few who saw disaster coming and tried to stop it were ignored or ridiculed or bullied. It's a disgrace that the people who are responsible for so much suffering of their fellow citizens are getting away with golden parachutes and lucrative careers, either in government or in banking. The top players seem to move back and forth between the two with impunity. I'm beginning to question the bailouts. I'm still not sure they were a bad idea; they kept the economy afloat. But the underlying problems have not been addressed, and the status quo sends the message that no matter what you do, the government will always bail you out. We need to reinstate Glass-Steagel and cut government ties with Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac. The Right carries on about downsizing government, but we need to downsize financial institutions even more. Being too big to fail should not be an option. I'm no economist, but I'm learning, and I have a certain amount of common sense. Even I know that living on credit (having done it myself) is unsustainable, but it's wrong to protect the top 1% at the expense of everybody else. The recent article on China raises the alarm of what might happen when the population grows dissatisfied. What might happen if Americans grow terminally dissatisfied? Gun sales are through the roof. I'm just saying....

[20120818-11](#) 16:19 Roy Re: The 'Scam' in a Nutshell (reply to SteveB, above)

I hope you're right – that the “public ain't gonna buy it.” Unfortunately, Obama has never gone after any of the bankers that scammed us out of billions, so many people aren't sure about him anymore. And unemployment is still extremely high, despite his claims of how he was going to turn unemployment around.

It looks like we're not going to have a good choice. Only the lesser of two evils. But then that's usually the case.

[20120819-01](#) 11:08 SteveB Re: The 'Scam' in a Nutshell (reply to Roy, above)

Yes, I think I've felt that every Presidential election I've ever voted in was just the “lesser of two evils.” I've never had a “hero” candidate whom I could get behind 100%.

That being said, to me, the greater of the two evils here is pretty apparent, I think you agree.

And I too am very disappointed that a lot more fat cats have not gone to jail. The whole system is corrupted by the big money. No question. And the Supreme Court is on the side against freedom!

[20120819-03](#) 11:57 Susette Re: The 'Scam' in a Nutshell (reply to SteveB, above)

Perhaps no countries' governments refer to corruption and graft within their own nation. Perhaps we are the only ones who will not admit to it. What would be the result of an accusation of corruption being lodged at our legislators/president/military/court system? Probably the chaos that arises anywhere. Can we handle that chaos? Will it not take form with others as they wrest control from the “corruptors”?

[20120819-04](#) 12:10 Pam Re: The 'Scam' in a Nutshell (reply to Susette, above)

Interesting point, but risking chaos by exposing corruption is a risk well worth taking. Corruption creates its own chaos, and unless it is rooted out it infects everything.

[20120819-16](#) 20:24 SteveB Re: The 'Scam' in a Nutshell (reply to Susette, above)

Interesting questions, Susette.

It's strange to me how well we control the kind of corruption in the U.S. that is rampant in the rest of the world—petty bribery. It certainly isn't unknown in the States, but it isn't a big problem. I've always thought that, somehow, our public schools were responsible for this lack of graft in most public offices. Why else would the U.S. be different than, say, Argentina in terms of personal honesty?

But the terrible kind of corruption we have in the U.S.—where politicians and the nation's future are sold to the highest political contributors—is almost unknown in most of the rest of the world. They have sensible laws that do not allow such shenanigans.

Somehow, America must do the same, or all is lost, I fear.

[20120819-05](#) 12:33 SteveG Re: The 'Scam' in a Nutshell (reply to all, above)

Transparency is a good word that is thrown around like a piece of trash. We have little idea of the corruption in corporations, state, local, federal government, and the effects on all of us. Probably never will know. It would be nice to at least try to out the corruption and live with that chaos for a change.

[20120819-07](#) 13:39 Art Re: The 'Scam' in a Nutshell (reply to all, above)

At the turn of the last century (1900) Argentina had approximately the same per capita standard of living as the USA. In the ensuing 100 years the difference by 2000 was startling. Why? Corruption mostly. While we undoubtedly have had some, they had a lot. Remember Peron? It will destroy us, if we don't get it under control.

Remember the fundamental of any business is to produce something (it doesn't have to be a thing, it can just be a loan or an investment) at the lowest possible price and sell it at the highest possible price. The bigger the difference, the better. Nothing wrong with that but for many businessmen that will mean cutting corners whenever possible (dog poop in the hamburger if you can get away with it), twisting any regulations possible to improve profit, buying politicians, cheating and on and on. The only things that restrain them are the loss of customers because of a shoddy product, but that can take time, or government regulations. I'm not sure these are the people we want running the government. I admire what they do but I don't trust any of them. Most of these so called republicans saviors are from this group. Lying, cheating, screwing the other guy in the name of profit is just a part of their makeup. I'm not sure these are the people we want running the government.

[20120819-08](#) 13:55 SteveG Re: The 'Scam' in a Nutshell (reply to Art, above)

Agree, Art. There is the old saying that money corrupts. Someone pointed out that Ryan was worth in the neighborhood of \$3.2 million and was only the 124th richest in Congress. With Citizens United in place, thank you he said sarcastically to the Supreme Court, the problem continues to grow with corruption, lying to make others look bad or yourself to falsely look good. A poor person, a middle/middle class, or even an upper middle class person does not have a chance in hell of winning office unless they are backed by BIG money, and then they become a pawn

[20120819-09](#) 13:59 Pam Re: The 'Scam' in a Nutshell (reply to Art, above)

Well, I'm sure I don't, but it seems we're stuck, for now anyway. We have our own generation of Robber Barons, and it's going to take a Teddy Roosevelt or someone to clean things up. The railroads were broken up; we need to do the same thing with the banks and lending institutions. I thought we had a law against monopolies, but I can't see that from where I'm standing. FDR was right about fear, and America is in the grip of it. We may not be packing up our belongings in our cars and heading west, but the same panicky mentality is lurking behind all of us. It's corruption that's gotten us in trouble in the past (Tea Pot Dome, the Savings and Loan collapse, etc.), and this time around it seems about as bad as it can get, short of outright fisticuffs on the Senate floor. The French aristocracy fell, the Roman empire fell, the Soviet Union fell, the Catholic church was riven. (Not in that order.) Why? Corruption. When change comes, it almost always comes from the bottom up, and those at the bottom are not necessarily the brightest bulbs in the lot. Anything can happen when the center does not hold (thank you, Yeats). Does anyone believe it's impossible for mayhem to break out in America? The 'sixties were bad, but the "revolution" was made up largely of middle-class college kids. The next revolution will not be manned by such genteel folks. And they won't be armed with pitchforks. The only solution that makes sense to me is for the government to subsidize jobs and get people working again and impose a fair tax on the wealthy. No one deserves what James Johnson has raked in through his manipulations of Fannie Mae, to take just one example. Then we can work on the deficit, and the way to do that is to clean up Wall Street.

[20120819-11](#) 17:23 Roy Re: The 'Scam' in a Nutshell (reply to SteveB & Pam, above)

Thank you, SteveB & Pam. I appreciate the reply and the suggestion on the book, *Reckless Endangerment*. I am going to pick it up right away.

[20120818-13](#) 23:10 SteveG "Suspects in Deputy Killings Linked to Extremists"

Has anyone been reading about the activities of the "sovereign citizens"?

"Suspects in Deputy Killings Linked to Extremists" by Cain Burdeau, AP/Yahoo! News

Aug. 18, 2012, (<http://news.yahoo.com/suspects-deputy-killings-linked-extremists-005244499.html>)

(NEW ORLEANS) At least some of the seven people arrested in a fatal shootout with Louisiana deputies have been linked to violent anarchists on the FBI's domestic terrorism watch lists, a sheriff said Saturday.

Detectives had been monitoring the group before Thursday's shootout in Laplace in which two deputies were killed and two more wounded, said DeSoto Parish Sheriff Rodney Arbuckle. His detectives and other law enforcement discovered the suspects were heavily armed adherents to an ideology known as the "sovereign citizens" movement.

The FBI has classified "sovereign citizens" as people who believe they are free from all duties of a U.S. citizen, like paying taxes. The FBI considers the group's members a danger for making threats to judges and law enforcement, using fake currency and impersonating police officers.

The seven suspects have been charged in the shooting of Deputy Michael Scott Boyington, who survived. But authorities have said murder charges are pending.

The Federal Bureau of Investigation said it was investigating the killings but declined to comment Saturday and referred questions to the Louisiana State Police, the lead investigating agency.

Arrested were the group's apparent leader, 44-year-old Terry Smith, his wife, Chanel Skains, 37, and his two sons, Derrick Smith, 22, and Brian Lyn Smith, 24. Also arrested were Brittney Keith, the girlfriend of Brian Smith; Kyle David Joekel, 28, and a woman living with him, 21-year-old Teniecha Bright.

Brian Smith was charged with attempted first-degree murder and the others with related charges.

Detectives in Tennessee, Nebraska and Louisiana have sketched a portrait of an outlaw gang led by a 44-year-old accused molester named Terry Smith, who has a criminal record dating to 1984 in Morehouse Parish, the *Times-Picayune* reported Saturday.

Morehouse Parish Sheriff Mike Stubbs said the Smith family was notorious. He said they lived for a long time in a house on the outskirts of Bastrop.

"We had a good bit of dealings with them," he said. He said the Smith brothers had been involved in theft and drugs.

Arbuckle, reached by telephone by The Associated Press, said his deputies had the group under surveillance and considered them armed and dangerous before they suddenly left his parish about two months ago. He said they had set up camp at a mobile home park while they working at an International Paper plant.

The sheriff said deputies became suspicious after they investigated a reported burglary in May at the park's laundry. The detectives discovered members wanted under warrants issued in Tennessee, Nebraska and Louisiana.

"Once we had them on our radar we started doing research on them," he said. Arbuckle said his detectives monitored the group until they left in November.

Sovereign citizens are a loosely organized movement founded in the 1970s and more fully developed in the 1980s, according to the Anti-Defamation League website. Sovereign citizens believe that all levels of government have no jurisdiction over them and resist — sometimes with violence — authority including police, the website said.

They also like to use what is dubbed "paper terrorism." It involves using frivolous lawsuits and fake documents and of using genuine documents such as IRS forms to intimidate, harass and coerce public officials, law enforcement officers and private citizens.

Arbuckle said his detectives could easily have been the victims instead of the St. John the Baptist Parish deputies killed and wounded. Deputies Brandon Nielsen and Jeremy Triche were killed and along with Boyington, Jason Triche was wounded. The Triches were somehow related, authorities said.

"We understand they had some pretty good firepower," Arbuckle said. "This very well could have been us" in the gunfight, he said.

He said the group traveled the country in trailers doing construction work and possessed a stockpile of weapons.

They were arrested after an early morning assault on Boyington led to the deadly shootout in the mobile home park in Laplace, a suburb west of New Orleans. Boyington was shot at the entrance of a parking lot used by contract workers on a job at a nearby oil refinery. He was working off-duty on a security detail at the lot.

Shortly thereafter, the other deputies were shot at the trailer park where a car involved in the first shooting was spotted.

Joekel and Brian Smith were hospitalized with gunshot wounds and will be jailed once they are out of the hospital. The others were jailed with bonds ranging from \$350,000 to \$750,000.

The Gage County, Neb., Sheriff's Office website listed Joekel among its most wanted fugitives, saying he is accused of making "terroristic threats" to patrons of a Nebraska bar and law enforcement officials.

Sgt. Len Marie, a state police spokesman, said investigators were amassing evidence. He said the agency had received the reports from the DeSoto sheriff and other law enforcement agencies in other states. He said the FBI and Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms was involved.

He said it was too early to verify links to the extremist groups associated with the sovereign citizen movement.

"We are confident that we have the people responsible for this in custody," Marie said.

20120819-02	11:09	Pam	Re: "Suspects in Deputy Killings Linked to Extremists" (reply to SteveG, above)
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We all remember the Weather Underground, the Black Panthers, the SLA, and in Europe the Red Brigades. In the 'sixties it was the far Left that caused a ruckus; now it looks like it's the far Right that's on the move. I don't know if these Sovereign Citizens have anything like a political agenda or whether they're just a bunch of criminals who get a thrill out of trashing things and people, but I don't think we should be too complacent about the possibility of Right-wing militant groups posing a threat. Folks who put ideas above people will do anything and find ways to justify their actions. I fear that we will be so focused on foreign terrorists that we will overlook even more dangerous home-grown ones. There are a lot of guns out there.



Not a very good situation...

Too bad we can't hear this on the Senate floor instead of Reid's BS...

[Source of original email unknown. -SteveB]

I know a lot of you folks don't like or agree with the NRA (National Rifle Association), but please watch this video. Every word of it is true. I've lived in Arizona so can back this up as being dead on the money. Eric holder wasn't mentioned in this video but should have been.

<http://videos.allinnra.com/share#.UB0fVI5mc0>

20120819-12 18:51 SteveB Re: NRA Video: "Borderless!" (reply to SteveM, above)

Her "God-given right to own a gun"???

I didn't know guns had been invented yet, the last time God was handing out rights...

I don't care if you're for or against guns (I tend to be for), it certainly ain't no "God-given right"!

20120819-13 19:05 SteveB Re: NRA Video: "Borderless!" (reply to SteveM, above) & Video: "Revealed: The GOP Strategy"

See if you think any of this sounds familiar to you...

Video: "Revealed: The GOP Strategy"

(http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=a0ccPh3YYH4)

20120818-08 11:54 SteveB "We Don't Need No Bloody Treaties: Britain Blows a Fuse over Ecuador's Asylum Grant to Wikileaks' Assange"

"We Don't Need No Bloody Treaties: Britain Blows a Fuse over Ecuador's Asylum Grant to Wikileaks' Assange" by Dave Lindorff, NationofChange

Aug. 18, 2012, (<http://www.nationofchange.org/we-don-t-need-no-bloody-treaties-britain-blows-fuse-over-ecuador-s-asylum-grant-wikileaks-assange-13>)

The concerted and orchestrated campaign to capture Wikileaks founder Julian Assange and ultimately to hand him over to the tender mercies of a kangaroo court in the U.S., where he would likely be tried for spying and other possibly capital offenses, continues as Britain threatens the Ecuadoran Embassy with a police assault.

According to the newspaper *The Australian*, a News Corp. property and Australian flagship of media baron Rupert Murdoch, Ecuador's Foreign Minister Ricardo Patino says he and the Ecuadoran ambassador received a written message yesterday from the British Foreign Office warning that Britain might send police to "assault" the country's embassy and forcibly remove Assange so as to hand him over to Sweden to face questioning on several controversial sexual assault claims made by women there.

Although the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations, passed in 1961 and signed by Britain, Sweden and the U.S., along with nearly every country in the world, clearly grants embassies the status of being considered the official territory of the country represented by the embassy, thus putting them beyond all laws of the host country, Britain is citing a 1987 U.K. law that states that when a foreign nation "ceases to use land for the purposes of its mission or exclusively for the purposes of a consular post," the Vienna Convention no longer applies, and the building is no longer beyond the reach of British police.

The text of the threatening U.K. letter, released by the Ecuadoran government, reads:

You need to be aware that there is a legal base in the UK, the Diplomatic and Consular Premises Act 1987, that would allow us to take actions in order to arrest Mr Assange in the current premises of the Embassy.

We sincerely hope that we do not reach that point, but if you are not capable of resolving this matter of Mr Assange's presence in your premises, this is an open option for us...

...We need to reiterate that we consider the continued use of the diplomatic premises in this way incompatible with the Vienna Convention and unsustainable and we have made clear the serious implications that this has for our diplomatic relations.

A letter sent to the government of Ecuador by the British Embassy in Quito was even more explicit, saying:

We must arrest Mr. Assange and extradite him to Sweden. Should you grant him asylum, and then request safe passage for him, we will refuse it. We consider Assange's use of diplomatic premises to be incompatible with the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations, and not sustainable. Under the Diplomatic and Consular Premises Act of 1987, we have a legal basis to arrest Mr. Assange inside your embassy. If you cannot resolve the issue of Mr. Assange's presence on your premises, then this route is open to us.

Clearly this threat is ridiculous on its face, given that the Vienna Convention is unambiguous in stating that embassies are inviolate. As Article 22 of the Convention puts it:

1. The premises of the mission shall be inviolable. The agents of the receiving State may not enter them, except with the consent of the head of the mission.
2. The receiving State is under a special duty to take all appropriate steps to protect the premises of the mission against any intrusion or damage and to prevent any disturbance of the peace of the mission or impairment of its dignity.
3. The premises of the mission, their furnishings and other property thereon and the means of transport of the mission shall be immune from search, requisition, attachment or execution.

There's not a lot of wiggle room left there for sending police barging into an embassy to grab someone. The British government's assertion that somehow the Ecuador Embassy, by granting Assange asylum from deportation to Sweden and possibly to the U.S. (which reportedly has a secret sealed indictment waiting for him), is "misusing" its embassy grounds and is thus not protected by the Vienna Convention is both absurd and dangerous. The ability of embassies to grant people asylum without fear of invasion by forces from the host country has been recognized for centuries, with its roots going back to the Greeks and Egyptians, and even at the coldest period of the Cold War, it was honored by rival states like Britain, the U.S., and the Soviet Union. If Assange, whose most serious "crime" at this point is skipping out on bail in Britain, can be roused from asylum in a foreign embassy, what does that mean for those people charged with "crimes" in countries like China or Cuba who may in the future seek asylum from persecution or prosecution in a British or a U.S. embassy? How would the late astrophysicist Fang Lizhi, an acknowledged intellectual mentor to many of the young activists in the Tiananmen Square demonstrations of 1989, who after the brutal government crackdown holed up with his wife for months in the U.S. Embassy in Beijing, have fared under such a warped interpretation of the Vienna Convention? How would Chen Guangcheng, the blind dissident in China who escaped house arrest and fled to the US Embassy, have fared?

It's significant that last year, the U.S. government, including even President Obama at a press conference, tried to claim that Raymond Davis (whom they all knew was a contract agent and paid killer from the CIA), was immune from arrest and prosecution in Pakistan even after he had brazenly slaughtered two young men on motorcycles, shooting them both in the back and then executing them with point-blank shots to the head, all in a crowded street in broad daylight. Their argument: he worked either for the U.S. Consulate in Lahore or the U.S. Embassy in Karachi. And he was nabbed at the scene of the crime. He wasn't even on protected consular grounds. (In the end, Pakistan let Davis escape the country, after the US paid death payments to Davis's victims' families in accordance with Sharia law.)

Actually, when it comes to use of an embassy or a consulate "in a way incompatible with the Vienna Convention," the U.S. and Britain, which post CIA agents or MI6 agents undercover as diplomats in most of their foreign embassies, and which have long used their so-called diplomatic "pouches" (which in the U.S. case can often be entire shipping containers!), immune from customs inspections, to transport weapons to favored terrorist groups inside countries like Chile or Iraq or Iran, are really guilty of using their embassies and consulates in ways that are "incompatible" with the Vienna Convention.

During the U.S. occupation of Iraq, there were a number of solid reports of weapons being smuggled into the country via diplomatic pouch to both countries for use by Iraqi operatives working outside the law, and for smuggling onward to groups inside Iran. Just today, Iran's PressTV reports that the US Consulate in the southern Iraqi city of Basra was found to have obtained, through diplomatic pouch, a shipment of light and heavy weapons

intended for smuggling to terror groups operating inside of Iran. At one point during the occupation, several British agents operating out of the British Consulate in Basra, were caught by Iraqi police driving a car while dressed in local arab garb. Found in the car were guns, RPGs, and bombs and wiring. They were arrested, but were later rescued by British military forces who stormed the police station. No arrests were made by Iraqi police of any British consular personnel following this incident, because of the Vienna Convention.

Why would Britain risk destroying that same Vienna Convention, which has been around since 1961, and even longer in other legal iterations, over such a minor case as ducking out on bail, particularly as Assange has never even been charged with a crime in Sweden, where a British Court says he has to be deported on an Interpol warrant? (He's just wanted in Sweden at this point only for questioning, technically). After all, Britain is no longer a global power, and stands to lose a lot if its own embassies no longer can count on protection under the Vienna Convention.

The answer to that would seem to be that it is the U.S., which despite its denials seems to desperately want to get Assange and prosecute him for leaking secret cables, which is behind this farce. The U.S., unlike Britain, is a global power to reckon with, and does not have to worry overmuch about its embassies being over-run (bombed maybe, but aside from the Iranian US Embassy occupation, which was not entirely government sanctioned, there has not been a U.S. Embassy taken over by government action, and there is unlikely to be). The costs to the host country would simply be too great.

As Ecuador has told Britain, an assault on an embassy is technically an act of war, as embassies are viewed legally as the territory of the home country they represent.

Already, there are threats in other countries to invade and take over British embassies if Britain makes good on its threat and has police assault the Ecuador embassy. It's a fair bet that in Latin America, where there is broad support for Ecuador's principled stand, and where asylum in embassies has a hallowed tradition and has saved many people during coups and dictatorships, it's a good bet that British embassies would take a heavy beating if Assange is dragged out of Ecuador's embassy. U.S. embassies too could take a hit, since Latin Americans are acutely aware of America's role in this affair, and have little love lost for America and its penchant for pushing its weight around. Ecuador's President Rafael Correa has called for a meeting of the Organization of American States to address the British threat to his country's sovereignty.

Odds are that Britain is bluffing, although it has massed police and vans around the Ecuador Embassy building, which, unlike the fort-like U.S. embassies around the world, sits unguarded and unwallled on a street in London, though the question of how or when Assange will be able to escape the embassy and gain safe passage out of Britain and to Ecuador, and whether he could subsequently avoid being kidnapped there and "renditioned" to the U.S., remains. British supporters of Assange have been putting out calls on social media for people to mass around the embattled embassy to protect it against a police assault. Some have already been arrested doing so there.

What this astonishing incendiary reaction by the British Foreign Office to Assange's grant of asylum by Ecuador makes abundantly clear is that Assange and his Wikileaks organization are truly feared by Britain and the U.S. His organization's ability to expose the war crimes, the war criminals, and the international treachery of these two countries and their allies around the world is one of the biggest threats they face, and they are proving it by their desperate efforts to neutralize or eliminate him.

20120818-09	12:45	SteveB	Fw: SignOn.org Petition: Reinstate the Glass-Steagall Act!
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from SignOn.org:

Glass-Steagall aided in a six-decade rise of a more egalitarian financial system and a healthy middle class. Its 1999 repeal ushered in our current era of reckless and ruinous banking practices, which brought the USA to the brink of financial disaster in 2008.

Essentially nothing has changed since then, and the economy remains at great risk. The banking system must be brought back to serving the people and sustaining the economy rather than draining its lifeblood.

Without a strong middle class, the America that we have known will cease to exist, and the oligarchs will have finally won their coveted prize. This must not be allowed to happen.

That's why I created a petition on SignOn.org to Congress and President Obama urging them to reinstate Glass-Steagall.

Click here to sign the petition to reinstate Glass-Steagall:

<http://signon.org/sign/reinstate-the-glass-steagall-5?source=mo&id=49172-20195165-LvBCLvx>.

The petition says:

Thomas Jefferson got it right when in 1802 he wrote, "I believe that banking institutions are more dangerous to our liberties than standing armies. If the American people ever allow private banks to control the issue of their currency, first by inflation, then by deflation, the banks and corporations that will grow up around the banks will deprive the people of all property—until their children wake up homeless in the continent their fathers conquered."

His words were prescient indeed as we are in the midst of the greatest transfer of wealth to a scarce few individuals and banks, all of it being done within the boundaries of laws that the bankers themselves have either written or paid well to have written.

Glass-Steagall prevented this egregious behavior and must be reinstated.

Click here to add your name to this petition, and then pass it along to your friends.

Thanks! –Mitchell Gershten

20120818-12	21:58	SteveG	"Should the Recent Upgrade of Standard Chartered Bank Concern Investors?"
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"Should the Recent Upgrade of Standard Chartered Bank Concern Investors?" by Matt Schilling, Seeking Alpha

Aug. 15, 2012, (<http://seekingalpha.com/article/809311-should-the-recent-upgrade-of-standard-chartered-bank-concern-investors>)

On Wednesday, August 15, both Nomura Holdings (NMR) and Bank of America (BAC) upgraded shares of Standard Chartered Bank (SCBFF.PK), and in most cases, I wouldn't have a problem with it, except in this case, it happens to be two highly scrutinized banks upgrading yet another highly scrutinized bank and with that I have a very big problem.

[Continue reading at Seeking Alpha...](#)

[Source of original email unknown. -SteveB]

Just Relax! Quit paying your insurance premiums. Free health care is here! The doctor will see you now.



 **BAMA-GARE**

Coming soon to a clinic near you

20120819-15

20:19

SteveB

Re: Photo: Just Relax! (reply to SteveM, above) & Cartoon: R0mney Running from Romneycare

The reality is so very different as to be, well...a different planet. LOL!



It is a miracle anyone survived! A great read... <http://www.barthworks.com/aviation/sr71breakup.htm>

"SR-71 Blackbird Breakup at Mach 3.18" by Bill Weaver (Chief Test Pilot, Lockheed), The Digital Aviator

Feb. 26, 2008, (<http://www.thedigitalaviator.com/blog/?p=504>)



Among professional aviators, there's a well-worn saying: Flying is simply hours of boredom punctuated by moments of stark terror. But I don't recall too many periods of boredom during my 30-year career with Lockheed, most of which was spent as a test pilot. By far, the most memorable flight occurred on Jan. 25, 1966.

Jim Zwyer, a Lockheed flight-test specialist, and I were evaluating systems on an SR-71 Blackbird test from Edwards. We also were investigating procedures designed to reduce trim drag and improve high-Mach cruise performance. The latter involved flying with the center-of-gravity (CG) located further aft than normal, reducing the Blackbird's longitudinal stability.

We took off from Edwards at 11:20 a.m. and completed the mission's first leg without incident. After refueling from a KC-135 tanker, we turned eastbound, accelerated to a Mach 3.2 cruise speed and climbed to 78,000 ft., our initial cruise-climb altitude.

Several minutes into cruise, the right engine inlet's automatic control system malfunctioned, requiring a switch to manual control. The SR-71's inlet configuration was automatically adjusted during supersonic flight to decelerate airflow in the duct, slowing it to subsonic speed before reaching the engine's face. This was accomplished by the inlet's center-body spike translating aft, and by modulating the inlet's forward bypass doors.

Normally, these actions were scheduled automatically as a function of Mach number, positioning the normal shock wave (where air flow becomes subsonic) inside the inlet to ensure optimum engine performance. Without proper scheduling, disturbances inside the inlet could result in the shock wave being expelled forward- a phenomenon known as an "inlet unstart."

That causes an instantaneous loss of engine thrust, explosive banging noises and violent yawing of the aircraft, like being in a train wreck. Unstarts were not uncommon at that time in the SR-71's development, but a properly functioning system would recapture the shock wave and restore normal operation.

On the planned test profile, we entered a programmed 35-deg. bank turn to the right. An immediate unstart occurred on the right engine, forcing the aircraft to roll further right and start to pitch up. I jammed the control stick as far left and forward as it would go. No response. I instantly knew we were in for a wild ride. I attempted to tell Jim what was happening and to stay with the airplane until we reached a lower speed and altitude. I didn't think the chances of surviving an ejection at Mach 3.18 and 78,800 ft. were very good. However, g-forces built up so rapidly that my words came out garbled and unintelligible, as confirmed later by the cockpit voice recorder.

The cumulative effects of system malfunctions, reduced longitudinal stability, increased angle-of-attack in the turn, supersonic speed, high altitude and other factors imposed forces on the airframe that exceeded flight control authority and the stability augmentation system's ability to restore control.

Everything seemed to unfold in slow motion. I learned later the time from event onset to catastrophic departure from controlled flight was only 2-3 seconds. Still trying to communicate with Jim, I blacked out, succumbing to extremely high g-forces.

Then the SR-71 literally disintegrated around us. From that point, I was just along for the ride. And my next recollection was a hazy thought that I was having a bad dream. Maybe I'll wake up and get out of this mess, I mused. Gradually regaining consciousness, I realized this was no dream; it had really happened. That also was disturbing, because I COULD NOT HAVE SURVIVED what had just happened.

I must be dead. Since I didn't feel bad- just a detached sense of euphoria- I decided being dead wasn't so bad after all. As full awareness took hold, I realized I was not dead. But somehow I had separated from the airplane.

I had no idea how this could have happened; I hadn't initiated an ejection. The sound of rushing air and what sounded like straps flapping in the wind confirmed I was falling, but I couldn't see anything. My pressure suit's face plate had frozen over and I was staring at a layer of ice.

The pressure suit was inflated, so I knew an emergency oxygen cylinder in the seat kit attached to my parachute harness was functioning. It not only supplied breathing oxygen, but also pressurized the suit, preventing my blood from boiling at extremely high altitudes. I didn't appreciate it at the time, but the suit's pressurization had also provided physical protection from intense buffeting and g-forces. That inflated suit had become my own escape capsule.

My next concern was about stability and tumbling. Air density at high altitude is insufficient to resist a body's tumbling motions, and centrifugal forces high enough to cause physical injury could develop quickly. For that reason, the SR-71's parachute system was designed to automatically deploy a small-diameter stabilizing chute shortly after ejection and seat separation. Since I had not intentionally activated the ejection system—and assuming all automatic functions depended on a proper ejection sequence—it occurred to me the stabilizing chute may not have deployed.

However, I quickly determined I was falling vertically and not tumbling. The little chute must have deployed and was doing its job. Next concern: the main parachute, which was designed to open automatically at 15,000 ft. Again I had no assurance the automatic-opening function would work.

I couldn't ascertain my altitude because I still couldn't see through the iced-up faceplate. There was no way to know how long I had been blacked-out or how far I had fallen. I felt for the manual-activation D-ring on my chute harness, but with the suit inflated and my hands numbed by cold, I couldn't locate it. I decided I'd better open the faceplate, try to estimate my height above the ground, then locate that "D" ring. Just as I reached for the faceplate, I felt the reassuring sudden deceleration of main-chute deployment.

I raised the frozen faceplate and discovered its uplatch was broken. Using one hand to hold that plate up, I saw I was descending through a clear, winter sky with unlimited visibility. I was greatly relieved to see Jim's parachute coming down about a quarter of a mile away. I didn't think either of us could have survived the aircraft's breakup, so seeing Jim had also escaped lifted my spirits incredible. I could also see burning wreckage on the ground a few

miles from where we would land. The terrain didn't look at all inviting—a desolate, high plateau dotted with patches of snow and no signs of habitation.

I tried to rotate the parachute and look in other directions. But with one hand devoted to keeping the face plate up and both hands numb from high-altitude, subfreezing temperatures, I couldn't manipulate the risers enough to turn. Before the breakup, we'd started a turn in the New Mexico-Colorado-Oklahoma-Texas border region. The SR-71 had a turning radius of about 100 miles at that speed and altitude, so I wasn't even sure what state we were going to land in. But, because it was about 3:00 p.m., I was certain we would be spending the night out here.

At about 300 ft. above the ground, I yanked the seat kit's release handle and made sure it was still tied to me by a long lanyard. Releasing the heavy kit ensured I wouldn't land with it attached to my derriere, which could break a leg or cause other injuries. I then tried to recall what survival items were in that kit, as well as techniques I had been taught in survival training.

Looking down, I was startled to see a fairly large animal—perhaps an antelope—directly under me. Evidently, it was just as startled as I was because it literally took off in a cloud of dust.

My first-ever parachute landing was pretty smooth. I landed on fairly soft ground, managing to avoid rocks, cacti and antelopes. My chute was still billowing in the wind, though. I struggled to collapse it with one hand, holding the still-frozen faceplate up with the other. "Can I help you?" a voice said. Was I hearing things? I must be hallucinating. Then I looked up and saw a guy walking toward me, wearing a cowboy hat. A helicopter was idling a short distance behind him. If I had been at Edwards and told the search-and-rescue unit that I was going to bail out over the Rogers Dry Lake at a particular time of day, a crew couldn't have gotten to me as fast as that cowboy-pilot had.

The gentleman was Albert Mitchell, Jr., owner of a huge cattle ranch in northeastern New Mexico. I had landed about 1.5 mi. from his ranch house—and from a hangar for his two-place Hughes helicopter. Amazed to see him, I replied I was having a little trouble with my chute. He walked over and collapsed the canopy, anchoring it with several rocks. He had seen Jim and me floating down and had radioed the New Mexico Highway Patrol, the Air Force and the nearest hospital.

Extracting myself from the parachute harness, I discovered the source of those flapping-strap noises heard on the way down. My seat belt and shoulder harness were still draped around me, attached and latched.

The lap belt had been shredded on each side of my hips, where the straps had fed through knurled adjustment rollers. The shoulder harness had shredded in a similar manner across my back. The ejection seat had never left the airplane. I had been ripped out of it by the extreme forces, with the seat belt and shoulder harness still fastened.

I also noted that one of the two lines that supplied oxygen to my pressure suit had come loose, and the other was barely hanging on. If that second line had become detached at high altitude, the deflated pressure suit wouldn't have provided any protection. I knew an oxygen supply was critical for breathing and suit-pressurization, but didn't appreciate how much physical protection an inflated pressure suit could provide.

That the suit could withstand forces sufficient to disintegrate an airplane and shred heavy nylon seat belts, yet leave me with only a few bruises and minor whiplash was impressive. I truly appreciated having my own little escape capsule.

After helping me with the chute, Mitchell said he'd check on Jim. He climbed into his helicopter, flew a short distance away and returned about 10 minutes later with devastating news: Jim was dead. Apparently, he had suffered a broken neck during the aircraft's disintegration and was killed instantly. Mitchell said his ranch foreman would soon arrive to watch over Jim's body until the authorities arrived. I asked to see Jim and, after verifying there was nothing more that could be done, agreed to let Mitchell fly me to the Tucumcari hospital, about 60 mi. to the south.

I have vivid memories of that helicopter flight, as well. I didn't know much about rotorcraft, but I knew a lot about "red lines," and Mitchell kept the airspeed at or above red line all the way. The little helicopter vibrated and shook a

lot more than I thought it should have. I tried to reassure the cowboy-pilot I was feeling OK; there was no need to rush. But since he'd notified the hospital staff that we were inbound, he insisted we get there as soon as possible. I couldn't help but think how ironic it would be to have survived one disaster only to be done in by the helicopter that had come to my rescue.

However, we made it to the hospital safely—and quickly. Soon, I was able to contact Lockheed's flight test office at Edwards. The test team there had been notified initially about the loss of radio and radar contact, then told the aircraft had been lost. They also knew what our flight conditions had been at the time, and assumed no one could have survived. I explained what had happened, describing in fairly accurate detail the flight conditions prior to breakup.

The next day, our flight profile was duplicated on the SR-71 flight simulator at Beale AFB, Calif. The outcome was identical. Steps were immediately taken to prevent a recurrence of our accident. Testing at a CG aft of normal limits was discontinued, and trim-drag issues were subsequently resolved via aerodynamic means. The inlet control system was continuously improved and, with subsequent development of the Digital Automatic Flight and Inlet Control System, inlet unstarts became rare.

Investigation of our accident revealed that the nose section of the aircraft had broken off aft of the rear cockpit and crashed about 10 mi from the main wreckage. Parts were scattered over an area approximately 15 miles long and 10 miles wide. Extremely high air loads and g-forces, both positive and negative, had literally ripped Jim and me from the airplane. Unbelievably good luck is the only explanation for my escaping relatively unscathed from that disintegrating aircraft.

Two weeks after the accident, I was back in an SR-71, flying the first sortie on a brand-new bird at Lockheed's Palmdale, Calif., assembly and test facility. It was my first flight since the accident, so a flight test engineer in the back seat was probably a little apprehensive about my state of mind and confidence.

As we roared down the runway and lifted off, I heard an anxious voice over the intercom.

"Bill! Bill! Are you there?"

"Yeah, George. What's the matter?"

"Thank God! I thought you might have left."

The rear cockpit of the SR-71 has no forward visibility—only a small window on each side—and George couldn't see me. A big red light on the master-warning panel in the rear cockpit had illuminated just as we rotated, stating: "Pilot Ejected." Fortunately, the cause was a misadjusted micro switch, not my departure.

(Bill Weaver flight-tested all models of the Mach-2 F-104 Starfighter and the entire family of Mach 3+ Blackbirds—the A-12, YF-12 and SR-71. He subsequently was assigned to Lockheed's L-1011 project as an engineering test pilot, and became the company's chief pilot. He later retired as Division Manager of Commercial Flying Operations. He still flies Orbital Sciences Corp.'s L-1011, which has been modified to carry the Pegasus satellite-launch vehicle. And as an FAA Designated Engineering Representative Flight Test Pilot, he's also involved in various aircraft-modification projects, conducting certification flight tests.)

<http://www.geolocation.ws/y/W/File:R%C3%ADo%20Pir%C3%AD%20-%20Santa%20Cruz%20-%20Bolivia.jpg/-/en>



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

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FRIENDS OF THE MIDDLE NEWSLETTER #208 — AUG. 21, 2012

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

INDEX: Click here.

The Truth Starts to Be Told

(posted by Steven W. Baker / SteveB, Aug. 21, 2012)

Look out, Republicans. I think there may a little too much TRUTH coming down the pike for you to handle!

"Paul Krugman Bashes Niall Ferguson's *Newsweek* Cover Story as 'Unethical'" by Bonnie Kavoussi, Huffington Post

Aug. 20, 2012, (http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/08/20/paul-krugman-niall-ferguson-newsweek_n_1810136.html?utm_hp_ref=mostpopular)



Paul Krugman bashed Niall Ferguson's new cover story in *Newsweek* in a *New York Times* blog post on Sunday.

Paul Krugman says that *Newsweek* needs to issue a correction for columnist Niall Ferguson's new cover story on why President Obama does not deserve reelection.

Krugman, the Nobel Prize-winning Princeton economics professor, wrote in a *Sunday New York Times* blog post titled "Unethical Commentary" that Ferguson misrepresented the costs of health care reform. Krugman wrote:

There are multiple errors and misrepresentations in Niall Ferguson's cover story in *Newsweek* — I guess they don't do fact-checking — but this is the one that jumped out at me. Ferguson says:

The president pledged that health-care reform would not add a cent to the deficit. But the CBO and the Joint Committee on Taxation now estimate that the insurance-coverage provisions of the ACA will have a net cost of close to \$1.2 trillion over the 2012–22 period.

Readers are no doubt meant to interpret this as saying that CBO found that the Act will increase the deficit. But anyone who actually read, or even skimmed, the CBO report (pdf) knows that it found that the ACA would reduce, not increase, the deficit — because the insurance subsidies were fully paid for.

Krugman concluded: "We're not talking about ideology or even economic analysis here — just a plain misrepresentation of the facts, with an august publication letting itself be used to misinform readers. The *Times* would require an abject correction if something like that slipped through. Will *Newsweek*?"

Krugman and Ferguson have been bashing each other in public for years. Ferguson has been advocating austerity to prevent interest rates on government debt from rising. But Krugman has pointed out that interest rates on government debt are at historic lows.

Ferguson, a Harvard history professor and *Newsweek* columnist, wrote in the magazine's Aug. 27 cover story that Obama should lose the upcoming election because the president has broken his promises. Ferguson says Obama has not created enough jobs, fixed the financial system or controlled health care costs or the national debt.

He also wrote that in "Obama's America, nearly half the population is not represented on a taxable return. [...] half of us [are] paying the taxes, the other half receiving the benefits."

This is not exactly true. Although roughly half of Americans do not pay federal income taxes, most of them still pay some combination of payroll taxes, state taxes, local taxes and sales taxes, according to the *Washington Post*.

Ferguson's story also included a chart that seemed to blame Obama for letting the U.S. economy lose ground to China's. The chart shows China's GDP as projected to surpass U.S. GDP in 2017, a projection whose inclusion Business Insider's Joe Weisenthal and Slate's Matt Yglesias called unfair. Yglesias wrote: "Ferguson is implicitly making two points with this graphic and it's difficult to know which of them is more absurd -- the idea that Obama is responsible for rapid economic growth in China or the idea that if he were responsible that would be blameworthy."

UPDATE: 11:10 a.m. -- Ferguson fired back at Krugman in a *Newsweek* blog post on Monday. He took issue with Krugman for suggesting that he had not read the CBO report. Ferguson wrote that the CBO did say in its report that health care reform will cost the government money, which would be partially offset by taxes. "Thanks for trying, Paul," Ferguson wrote.

UPDATE: 11:48 a.m. -- Another noted economist has blasted Ferguson for his cover story, this time going further than Krugman by calling for Ferguson to get fired. Brad DeLong, economics professor at the University of California at Berkeley, wrote in a blog post on Monday:

Fire his a*s. Fire his a*s from *Newsweek*, and the Daily Beast. Convene a committee at Harvard to examine whether he has the moral character to teach at a university. There is a limit, somewhere. And Ferguson has just gone beyond it.

UPDATE: 12:56 p.m. -- *Newsweek* did not fact-check Ferguson's cover story, according to Dylan Byers, a media reporter at Politico. Byers wrote on Twitter that a Newsweek spokesman said the magazine does not have a fact-checking department, and that "we, like other news organisations today, rely on our writers to submit factually accurate material."

UPDATE: 1:25 p.m. -- Matt O'Brien, associate business editor at *The Atlantic*, wrote a stinging blog post fact-checking Ferguson's cover story, writing that "we got an exercise in Ferguson's specialty -- counterfactual history." Head over to *The Atlantic* for the full fact-check.

"Obama on Romney Welfare Accusations: 'You Can't Just Make Stuff Up'" by Arthur Delaney, Huffington Post

Aug. 20, 2012, (http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/08/20/obama-romney-welfare-reform_n_1812171.html?utm_hp_ref=politics)

(WASHINGTON) During a surprise appearance in the White House Briefing Room on Monday, President Barack Obama responded to Republican challenger Mitt Romney's claim that Obama has "gutted" work requirements for welfare recipients. Obama called the charge "absolutely wrong."

A reporter asked Obama if he was comfortable with the tone of his campaign, pointing to an ad by an Obama-supporting super PAC that implied Romney bore responsibility for a woman's cancer death after her husband lost his job following a buyout by Romney's former company.

"I don't think that Gov. Romney is somehow responsible for the death of the woman that was portrayed in that ad," Obama said. "But keep in mind this is an ad that I didn't approve, I did not produce, and as far as I can tell, has barely run."

The president then pointed out that Romney himself has endorsed attack ads rated false by a plethora of newspapers and fact-checkers. (The Romney camp released the latest such ad earlier on Monday.)

"Now, in contrast you've got Gov. Romney creating as a centerpiece of his campaign this notion that we're taking the work requirement out of welfare, which every single person here who's looked at it says is patently false," Obama said. "What he's arguing is somehow we have changed the welfare requirement, the work requirement in our welfare laws. And, in fact, what's happened was that my administration, responding to the requests of five governors, including two Republican governors, agreed to approve giving them, those states, some flexibility in how they manage their welfare rolls as long as it produced 20 percent increases in the number of people who are getting work."

Nevada and Utah were among the states interested in greater flexibility in the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families program, better known as welfare. The Obama administration has not announced that any waivers have gone out.

"Everybody who's looked at this says what Gov. Romney's saying is absolutely wrong," Obama continued. "Not only are his super PACs running millions of dollars worth of ads making this claim, Gov. Romney himself is approving this and saying it on the stump. So the contrast, I think, is pretty stark. They can run the campaign that they want, but the truth of the matter is you can't just make stuff up."

"Todd Akin Piers Morgan Interview Fail: Embattled Senate Candidate Bails on CNN Host" by Peter Finocchiaro, Huffington Post

Aug. 20, 2012, (http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/08/20/todd-akin-piers-morgan-interview_n_1814683.html?utm_hp_ref=media)

(Missouri Congressman Todd Akin reportedly bailed on a planned interview with Piers Morgan on Monday evening.)

Todd Akin's bad week keeps getting worse.

The six-term Missouri GOP congressman, a candidate for U.S. Senate, apparently bailed on a planned interview with CNN's Piers Morgan, leaving the host to berate him as a "gutless little twerp" Monday evening.

Akin's troubles began Sunday when he suggested during a television interview that women who are victims of "legitimate rape" are biologically unlikely to become pregnant -- attributing the dubious science to "doctors." Numerous Republicans have called on the congressman to withdraw from his challenge against Democratic Sen. Claire McCaskill.

Akin has apologized for his remarks, and insisted he'll stay in the race. However, the media firestorm shows little sign of abating after two days.

Staring at the empty chair, a nonplussed Morgan issued this challenge to Akin: "Congressman, you have an open invitation to join me in that chair whenever you feel up to it, because if you don't keep your promise to be on the show, then you are what we would call in Britain a gutless little twerp."

MSNBC's "Last Word" with Lawrence O'Donnell faced similar circumstances earlier this year, when Craig Sonner, then-lawyer for Trayvon Martin shooter George Zimmerman, fled the scene of a planned interview moments before it was set to begin. O'Donnell proceeded to lambaste Sonner while sharing the screen with a live feed of the attorney's conspicuously empty chair.



This looks amazingly a lot like the money schools get, not where needed, more where not needed. Hmmm ALASKA???

"States That Get the Most Federal Money" by Michael Sauter, Lisa Uible, Lisa Nelson, and Alexander E.M. Hess, 24/7 Wall St.

Aug. 3, 2012, (<http://247wallst.com/2012/08/03/states-that-get-the-most-federal-money/>)

In 2010, the federal government took the hundreds of billions of dollars it received in corporate, income and property taxes from each state and respend that money — and then some — on programs in each state. A review of federal data indicates that some states, considering their size and the taxes they paid, received a disproportionate amount of funding relative to the amount they put in each year.

The states that receive the most money from the federal government each year are, generally, the most populous ones. In 2010, eight of the 10 states with the highest population received the most. California, the most populous state in the country, receives the largest share — more than a third of a trillion dollars. However, when accounting for population and the amount states pay in federal taxes, the breakdown looks very different.

The states that received the most money from the federal government were identified using the most recent data from the U.S. Census Bureau's Consolidated Federal Funds report, which breaks out how much the federal government spent on various programs, grants and public employee salaries by state. We relied on data from the Internal Revenue Service to calculate the amount that states pay in income tax to the federal government. Based on these reports, 24/7 Wall St. identified the 10 states that received the most money from the federal government, relative to how much they paid in income tax.

Some states, including Alaska and Virginia, received more than \$15,000 per person from the federal government, even after subtracting the billions the state spent on income tax. This figure is nearly two-and-a-half times the amount received per person after taxes in states like Nevada, one of the poorest states in the country.

It would be expected that states that receive more money from the federal government are in greater need. However, most of the 10 states with the highest federal spending per capita had a higher median household income than the United States average. In fact, the first-, third-, fourth- and fifth-wealthiest by this measure all received the most money from the government. Because of their wealth, these states spent the most per capita in income tax, but it is negligible compared to the vast amounts they received.

A review of the data shows that some very large programs, including defense spending, Medicare and Medicaid, Social Security, and farm subsidies, had major effects on how much money each state received, to the extent that individuals get far more per person than in other states. In some cases, it was several programs that affected the total amount the government spent on the state per capita, but in others, it may have been just one program.

Often that program was defense spending. States like Virginia, Alaska, Maryland and New Mexico received the most money per capita in federal procurement spending, which includes things like Medicaid and NASA, but the majority of which goes to the Department of Defense. To give an idea of the amount of money the federal government poured into military bases and research centers in these states, the government spent approximately \$7,300 per person on all programs in Nevada. It also spent approximately \$5,000 per person on defense spending alone in Virginia.

Another program that requires a great deal of funding is the direct payments outside of retirement and disability. Within this category is Medicare. A couple of the states that received the most federal funds also received an extraordinarily large amount of money for medical prescription drug coverage under Medicare. More than 25% of all the funds that Connecticut received from the federal government were for drug benefits under Medicare.

Expenditures on Salaries and Wages is another category in which these states lead the country in spending per capita. This category includes the salaries and wages of defense workers and non-defense workers alike. All five of the top 10 states receiving the most in this category are represented on our list.

24/7 Wall St. identified the states that get the most money from the federal government by taking the figures for federal expenditures in each state from the 2010 Consolidated Federal Funds report and subtracting from it the income taxes retained, net of refunds, by the federal government for each state for the same year. The values obtained were then divided by state population figures for 2010 from the census bureau to arrive at a per capita figure for each state.

These are the states that get the most federal money:

10. North Dakota

- Federal spending per capita net of income taxes: \$10,438
- Total federal spending per capita: \$12,930
- Federal income taxes per capita: \$2,492

With the third-smallest population in the U.S., North Dakota's federal spending per capita was understandably larger than more populous states. North Dakota ranked third in the country for receiving Direct payments other than retirement and disability. What is unusual is the large amount of money that North Dakota farmers received from the federal government — the state ranked second in agricultural assistance in the nation, behind only Texas, which has a population more than 37 times that of North Dakota.

9. Connecticut

- Federal spending per capita net of income taxes: \$10,506
- Total federal spending per capita: \$15,662
- Federal income taxes per capita: \$5,156

Connecticut received almost 50% more government funding per capita than the national average. In 2010, Connecticut was awarded \$11.1 billion in military procurement contracts, giving the state the fourth-highest per capita federal defense expenditure — \$3,351.88. The Constitution State ranked first for the amount of spending for direct payments other than retirement and disability on a per capita basis. A significant chunk of this amount — almost 60% — was spent solely on medical prescription drug coverage. At \$14.1 billion, the amount of federal government expenditures on prescription drugs in Connecticut was more than any other state and over \$5 billion more than Florida, the state receiving the second-most federal funds in this category. Connecticut also ranked fifth in per capita federal funding from procurement spending.

8. West Virginia

- Federal spending per capita net of income taxes: \$10,568
- Total federal spending per capita: \$11,609
- Federal income taxes per capita: \$1,041

West Virginia is the only state in the top 10 where federal spending on defense was not a significant contributor to the total amount of money this state received. In fact, West Virginia ranked 48th for federal defense spending — \$609 per capita. A large portion of federal spending in West Virginia, almost 16%, was for Medicare benefits, slightly more than the national rate of 15.6%. West Virginia ranked first in the country for the percentage of people using this benefit at nearly 20%. West Virginians also received more federal spending per capita on retirement and disability benefits — which includes Social Security payments, federal retirement and disability benefits, and veterans benefits — than any other state.

7. Alabama

- Federal spending per capita net of income taxes: \$10,656

- Total federal spending per capita: \$11,820
- Federal income taxes per capita: \$1,164

Alabama comes in second for the amount of spending per capita — \$3,761 — on retirement and disability. The Cotton State also ranks seventh for procurement spending per capita, 78% of which was defense spending, and large parts of which also included the Department of Health and Human Services and the Department of Agriculture. Most of this procurement spending falls under the section of Department of Defense spending. Aside from Virginia and Kentucky, Alabama is the only state on this list that is in the bottom half of states for the amount of grant spending per capita. Grant spending encompasses a vast number of federal agencies and departments within each state.

6. Kentucky

- Federal spending per capita net of income taxes: \$12,129
- Total federal spending per capita: \$13,198
- Federal income taxes per capita: \$1,069

The federal government gave Kentucky more than \$7,000 per person on direct payments, which included retirement and disability benefits, unemployment benefits and student assistance — all large programs. Medicare benefits accounted for nearly 57% of such payments. This was partially due to the high amount of government money going toward prescription drug coverage in the state — \$5.46 billion in 2010. Kentucky received almost \$1.5 billion more for prescription drug coverage than California, a state with almost nine times its population.

5. New Mexico

- Federal spending per capita net of income taxes: \$12,399
- Total federal spending per capita: \$13,578
- Federal income taxes per capita: \$1,179

New Mexico received the third-highest procurement spending per capita in the U.S. at \$3,641.68. A significant component of this spending was under the category of non-defense agency spending for the Department of Energy. New Mexico received more federal funding from the Department of Energy than any other state, with an amount of \$4.8 billion. This is due to the three nuclear weapons facilities located within the state. New Mexico also ranks seventh for the grant expenditures it received per capita. More than 60% of these grants were from the Department of Health and Human Services. Some 22.53% of the population was on Medicaid — the fourth highest percentage in the nation — which is funded through this department.

4. Hawaii

- Federal spending per capita net of income taxes: \$13,709
- Total federal spending per capita: \$15,331
- Federal income taxes per capita: \$1,622

The Hawaiian Islands have 11 military bases, contributing to the country's highest per capita federal expenditure from the Department of Defense in 2010. Along with a large number of military personnel on the government payroll, Hawaii also had the highest federal salaries and wages. Some 77% of the salaries and wages paid are for active military personnel. The state had the 10th highest federal procurement spending per capita, at \$2,017.80. Since 2006, federal expenditure on salaries and wages in Hawaii has more than doubled.

3. Maryland

- Federal spending per capita net of income taxes: \$13,723
- Total federal spending per capita: \$16,673
- Federal income taxes per capita: \$2,950

Maryland had the fifth-highest federal spending per capita from the Defense Department — the state has 11 military bases. In addition, the state received more spending per capita in nonmilitary programs than any other. The state's proximity to the capital is likely a major factor in this. The state received more than 5% of the total U.S. procurement expenditure, and ranked second in per capita procurement spending — \$4,593.79 — nearly three times the national average. Of the 50 states, Maryland has the second-lowest percentage of people living below the poverty line.

2. Virginia

- Federal spending per capita net of income taxes: \$14,201
- Total federal spending per capita: \$17,008
- Federal income taxes per capita: \$2,807

Virginia received more than \$136 billion in federal funds in 2010. This state received more than 12% of the total Department of Defense procurement spending — the second-highest proportion in the country, behind California. The state received the highest per capita procurement funding and the third-highest per capita federal expenditures for salaries and wages. The state's proximity to the capital is a factor in the high government expenditures. Despite receiving the second-most federal funds per capita, Virginia was very low in terms of the grant funding it received.

1. Alaska

- Federal spending per capita net of income taxes: \$15,197
- Total federal spending per capita: \$17,762
- Federal income taxes per capita: \$2,565

No state in the U.S. received more money per person from the federal government than Alaska. One contributing factor is that the state had the second-highest figure for defense spending in 2010, at \$7,337.59 per capita. The federal government also allocated a great deal toward wages and salaries in Alaska — \$5,709.52 per capita. This was more than any state other than Hawaii, which spent \$5,805.78 per person, and twice the next-closest state within the contiguous U.S. — Virginia — at \$2,638.68.

[20120820-02](#)

11:29

Bill

Graphic: Good Question!!!

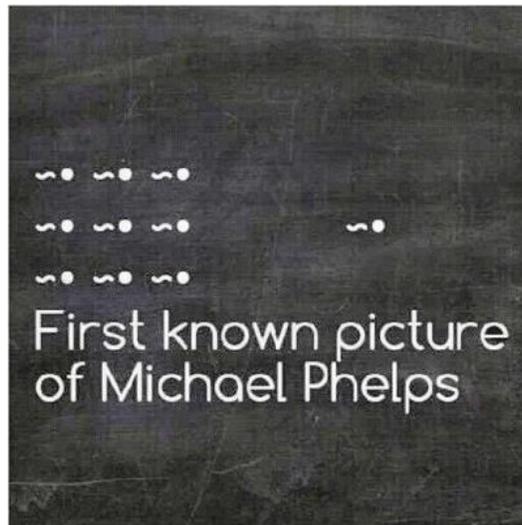
**Remember when teachers,
public employees, Planned Par-
enthood, NPR and PBS crashed
the stock market, wiped out
half of our 401Ks, took trillions
in taxpayer funded bail outs,
spilled oil in the Gulf of Mexico,
gave themselves billions in
bonuses, and paid no taxes?
Yeah, me neither... Pass it on**

20120820-03

11:31

Bill

Graphic: First Known Picture of Michael Phelps



20120820-04

12:50

Art

Re: NRA Video: "Borderless!" (reply to SteveB & SteveM, FotM Newsletter #207)

Thanks Steve, I watched the NRA piece trying to see if I am just missing something. I get there is an underground war going on among the Mexican drug cartels. We all know that. Although the op-ed piece tries to skirt the issue, the fact is almost all of the guns are coming from the USA. Putting that aside, what is the point of the rest of the piece? Yes, there are illegal immigrants coming across the border. For the most part they are looking for jobs. They've been doing that for close to a century now. What's the connection with all the drama about what is currently going on in Mexico? I suppose it could come here and practice mayhem, but we have our own home grown terrorists like the guy who murdered the Sikhs doing that already. So what's the point? The last I heard, there haven't been any massacres in Arizona or Texas of United States citizens by these guys.

The NRA could do a lot of good and I think it once was a decent organization. Somewhere along the way, the leadership got bought out by big money and they've been nothing but a shell for gun manufacturers ever since. La Pierre, or whatever his name is, is a true scumbag. A .38 special is good for one thing—robbing 7-11s. I cannot see the slightest reason anyone needs a 100-round magazine for any rifle or pistol. Why do citizens need armor piercing bullets? Yet every time anyone tries to put some reason in the discussion, the NRA screams their old tired mantra, "They just want to steal all our guns". Truly pathetic.

Like you, I have guns and, what's more, I actually know how to use them—30 years of training. The first thing most of these idiots will do in a crisis is shoot themselves in the foot or, worse, some innocent bystander. Just dumb.

20120820-09

16:16

SteveM

Re: NRA Video: "Borderless!" (reply to Art, above)

Art, you are WRONG, only 20% of the guns come from the USA.. But 80 % of those are Unidentifiable as such. and that's the figure the liars like Hillary and Janet use to make believe that all the gun are from the US. I live on the border. I've heard the murders of illegals by the Cartel bandits from my back porch. And a smuggler pilot was murdered just blocks from my house by a punk I had confronted only hours earlier.

Welcome to the Wild West, If you're not shooting, you better be reloading

Political correctness is a doctrine, fostered by a delusional, illogical minority, and rabidly promoted by an unscrupulous mainstream media, which holds forth the proposition that it is entirely possible to pick up a turd by the clean end.

[20120820-15](#) 18:39 Art Re: NRA Video: "Borderless!" (reply to SteveM, above)

SteveM, I'm sorry but these are just unsubstantiated statements. Where do you get your data on the gun source percentages? The facts are the NRA and southwestern gun dealers have done everything they can to block any attempt at gun accountability or gun control and we are the source of the guns, or so says the President of Mexico among many, many others.

I am sorry for your personal experiences, but they do not reflect that of others I know who live along the Arizona and California borders.

As for your last paragraph, it reminds me of the SDS students I used to have confront me at UC Davis between tours in Vietnam. Mindless memorized rhetoric that added nothing to the discussion. I was too busy fighting a war to pay much attention at the time and, frankly, now I just find it silly.

Glad to have a logical discussion. There are points to be made for many approaches, but they have to be presented in a logical manner.

20120820-18 21:20 SteveM	Re: NRA Video: "Borderless!" (reply to Art, above) & "Once Welcoming, Borderlands Now Forever Divided" & "Southwest Border Violence: Issues in Identifying and Measuring Spillover Violence" & "Killed in Smuggling Corridor Where Deputy Was Shot: Two Men" & "Tucson Sector Border Patrol Reports: \$2.3 Million in Dope and One Truck Seized"
--	--

Art, the gun stats are government stats Hillary, Janet, at el simply culled what the need to make they're cases to fire up the liberal base. I try not to use unsubstantiated facts. They are from the congressional record, which is probably why you don't hear the Dem choir singing that song any longer. Feel free to look it up, I sent the data to another one of SteveB's devotes about a year ago. Tried of doing the leg work for you all.

And Art, you're a little new to the border party, this cr*p has be going on for 40 plus years that I know of and everyone I know along the border has a story like mine. Why, last November, my pal Gil had 5 illegals walk up and "surrender" to him while he was deer hunting. Mind you they initiated the surrender.

If you live south of I-8 and I-10 in Cochise, Pima, Pinal or Yuma County, you have a story like mine. I'm betting your sources don't live in the geographic area I've described. Agent Terry Is not the only "cop" who's been shot. And it's not the first "armed" incursion in the Tucson sector. I don't know where your California and AZ friends live, but I've encountered problems in the deserts of both states. I know damn well when two Mexican nationals were gunned down in Tucson at the "tony" intersection of Swan and Skyline, It didn't make the national news. But two Mexican nationals (Sinaloa Cartel) were arrested for it, convicted, and deported to Mexican prison.

Bet you didn't hear about the two beheaded bodies found on Mile Wide Road (smuggling route) west of Tucson, last summer either.

When Gabby was shot everyone in my neighborhood thought Cartels. Even the two Cops. Because of her work to secure the border after Krentz's murder by Cartel scouts.

Finally, Art, Holder's DOJ and ATF have admitted to encouraging gun shops to allow the guns to walk. Statements of ATF agents obtained by Senator Grassley and CBS News show that the ATF Phoenix Field Division allowed and facilitated the sale of over 2,500 firearms (AK-47 rifles, FN 5.7mm pistols, AK-47 pistols, and .50 caliber rifles) in 'straw man purchases' destined for Mexico.

How in the hell can you state "NRA and southwestern gun dealers have done everything they can to block any attempt at gun accountability" In this instance, when they are asked not to cooperate by the Feds?

Arizona is also number one in Identity Theft, because of the Cartels: <http://identitytheftnetwork.org/network-of-coalitions/arizona-id-theft-coalition>.

Which presents a whole other problem to our sovereignty! Not to mention that 75% of the fires on the border are set by smugglers and illegals. Also found in the Congressional record.

PS — Don't ever equate me with the SDS. And don't bother to reply, because it's clear you know nothing of the border. It's not about gun control and everything about US sovereignty!

Unsubstantiated my a*s!

The AZ "red" *Star* is about as liberal as it gets, but even they have had enough.

"The Border Series: Life Then and Now" — Part 1: "Once Welcoming, Borderlands Now Forever Divided" by Brady McCombs, *Arizona Daily Star*

Dec. 11, 2011, (http://azstarnet.com/news/local/border/once-welcoming-borderlands-now-forever-divided/article_7370860b-a9bb-5a04-a176-3acf3d48f9a2.html)

A borderline that for generations was like a picket fence between neighbors is now a wedge between old friends.

At legal entry points along the U.S.-Mexico border, lines of cars often stretch for blocks as people wait to cross into and out of Mexico. Between the ports, most flimsy, barbed-wire cattle fences have been replaced by hulking steel walls or chest-high vehicle barriers made of railroad ties.

It's tougher than ever to cross, legally or illegally. And that has altered the borderlands for people who live, visit, ranch or own businesses there.

[Continue reading at *Arizona Daily Star*...](#)

"Southwest Border Violence: Issues in Identifying and Measuring Spillover Violence" by Kristin M. Finklea, William J. Krouse, and Marc R. Rosenblum, Congressional Research Service

Aug. 25, 2011, (<http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/homesec/R41075.pdf>)

There has been an increase in the level of drug trafficking-related violence within and between the drug trafficking organizations in Mexico. This violence has generated concern among U.S. policy makers that the violence in Mexico might spill over into the United States. U.S. federal officials have denied that the increase in drug trafficking-related violence in Mexico has resulted in a spillover into the United States, but they acknowledge that the prospect is a serious concern.

The most recent threat assessment indicates that the Mexican drug trafficking organizations pose the greatest drug trafficking threat to the United States, and this threat is driven partly by U.S. demand for drugs. Mexican drug trafficking organizations are the major suppliers and key producers of most illegal drugs smuggled into the United States across the Southwest border (SWB). The nature of the conflict between the Mexican drug trafficking organizations in Mexico has manifested itself, in part, as a struggle for control of these smuggling routes into the United States. Further, in an illegal marketplace—such as that of illicit drugs—where prices and profits are elevated due to the risks of operating outside the law, violence or the threat of violence becomes the primary means for settling disputes.

[Continue reading at Federation of American Scientists...](#)

"Killed in Smuggling Corridor Where Deputy Was Shot: Two Men" by Rynski, Dying to Death

June 14, 2010, (<http://deathisdeadly.com/2010/06/14/killed-in-smuggling-corridor-where-deputy-was-shot-two-men/>)

Two men were found slain June 6 in the same smuggling corridor where Pinal County sheriff Deputy Louie Puroll was shot and wounded April 30, according to a news release from the Pinal County Sheriff's Office.

An emergency 911 call came into the sheriff's office around 7:30 p.m. from a Spanish speaking man who said he and his "partner" had been shot.

[Continue reading at Dying to Death...](#)

Bet you didn't hear about this one either:

"Tucson Sector Border Patrol Reports: \$2.3 Million in Dope and One Truck Seized" by Hugh Holub, *Tucson Citizen*

Aug. 11, 2011, (<http://tucsoncitizen.com/view-from-baja-arizona/2011/08/11/tucson-sector-border-patrol-reports-2-3-million-in-dope-and-one-truck-seized/>)

(TUCSON) Border Patrol agents assigned to the Ajo Station seized nearly 3,000 pounds of marijuana Saturday worth about \$2.3 million.

Agents operating a mobile surveillance system near Lukeville observed suspicious activity involving a vehicle west of State Route 85 and directed other agents to the location. As agents approached the vehicle, unidentified subjects fled south; possibly into Mexico due to the close proximity of the international boundary.

[Continue reading at the Tucson Citizen...](#)

[I'm happy to see so much documentation from the Right, SteveM! We don't often get that. They usually take their marbles and run home before even starting to prove their side of the argument. -SteveB]

20120820-05	14:36	SteveB	"Todd Akin: It's Not a War on Women, It's a War on Critical Thinking & Democracy"
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Personally, I'm sick of the whole ignorant lot of them! Questions?

"Todd Akin: It's Not a War on Women, It's a War on Critical Thinking and Democracy" by Soraya Chemaly, *Huffington Post*

Aug. 20, 2012, (http://www.huffingtonpost.com/soraya-chemaly/todd-akin-rape_b_1810928.html?utm_hp_ref=politics)

In case you've been deep-sea diving in the Mariana Trench, yet another Republican Congressman unwittingly revealed his party's contempt for and distrust of women. And he did it by illustrating how the "war on women" is part of a larger issue. What Todd Akin said and believes doesn't just play into a media-catchy, election year "war on women" narrative. It's part of a reactionary, fundamentalist backlash to modernity. **It's a war on science. It's a war on facts. It's a war on critical thinking. But, really, consider it a war on democracy.** Statements like Akin's reflect the degree to which some men, steeped in all sorts of dangerous denialism, will go to protect their power and how they undermine equality and democracy to do it. Mitt Romney's smart, he gets how Akin made this obvious, which is why he's distancing himself so fast and furiously from this incident. But, Romney deep down inside agrees with the ideas that reside under the surface of such an obvious mistake. That's why he will not

renounce his rights-stripping-for-women-personhood-for-fetuses happy running mate Paul Ryan, who shares the ideas expressed by Akin, even if he expresses himself less offensively.

When asked about exceptions for abortions of pregnancies resulting from rape Missouri Representative Todd Akin of the Primacy of the Father Cult (formerly known as the GOP) had this to say:

First of all, from what I understand from doctors, that's really rare. If it's a legitimate rape, the female body has ways to try to shut that whole thing down. But let's assume that maybe that didn't work or something. I think there should be some punishment, but the punishment ought to be on the rapist and not attacking the child.

The amount that this man doesn't understand is staggering. He shouldn't even try putting the words "doctors" and "understand" in the same sentence. It just confuses him. But, the problem is, he's not an exception.

Although the six-term Congressman, who is running against Democratic Senator Claire McCaskill in the November 6 election, won't apologize, he has graciously come forward to join a long line of rape apologists who "misspoke." He did not "misspeak." Misspeaking is defined as "Expressing oneself imperfectly or inaccurately." He was very clear: "If it's a legitimate rape, the female body has ways to try to shut that whole thing down."

He wittingly regurgitated common misogynistic lies about women, their bodies, rape, pregnancy and abortion. Like Chloe Angel, at Feministing who wrote a thank you note to Akin earlier today, I am loathe to engage in uncivil discourse. I, too, believe that people who disagree should be able to do so with respect and without resorting to personal assault. However, these lies are so blatant and result in so much harm that they have to be named for what they are and challenged loudly and repeatedly and persistently.

His statements reveal several ideas about women, who bear the immediate and obvious brunt of this type of assault on reason:

1. That women lie about their rapes -- those would be, I assume, "illegitimate rapes." Either that, or he implied like other conservative Republican legislators, that women don't actually understand when they have been raped. Or better yet, that they are sluts and somehow "want it." OR, not to be ignored, that women who are raped by their husbands aren't "really" raped. OR... yes... there is another one... that women will claim they've been raped to gain the upper hand in divorce. These ideas are really important to Akin and others, like Paul Ryan, both of whom co-sponsored a bill to change the word "rape" to "forcible rape" in legislation about federal funding to abortion.
2. That even if women do get raped their bodies somehow "take care of it." Akin's comments reveal the shocking level of scientific illiteracy and denialism embraced by Republican legislators when they deal with "women's issues." Even if some benighted predatory rapist repeated "I have legitimately raped you" three times while waving their weaponized dicks in the air, women do not emit some mystical, magical hormone "to shut that whole thing down." Is it too much to ask that people suggesting, making and enforcing our laws know how to spell "biology"?
3. That women who are raped don't get pregnant much so we shouldn't worry our pretty heads about maybe getting pregnant and needing an abortion. It turns out that some women's bodies don't take care of it. The Washington Post cited a study that revealed that at least 5 percent of rape victims end up pregnant. Mr. Akin, who has explained that he is empathetic to their plights, might want to personally explain to one of the 32,000 women forced to be pregnant against their will that it is "rare."

Akin's "gaff" is not harmless. It is not just "out of touch." It's DANGEROUS AND CAUSES PAIN and OPPRESSION. And, it's not a "November" issue. It's a "just world" issue. It's a "think for yourself" issue. These people aren't pro-life. They're pro-pain. Pain central to redemption.

Which is why this is also a prime example of how religious privileging in education and public discourse overtakes reason and results in debilitating ignorance and real and tangible harm for children and women. And men. Ideas like Akin's are why rape tragedies like what happened at Penn State and the ongoing Catholic abuse nightmare

happen. Ideas like Akin's and friends', grounded in misconceived ideas about sexuality and women's inherent sinfulness, their shame, their laboring for their wrongs, their sacrifice, their punishment, deny the reality of male victims of rape. These religiously vectored ideas are central to their political and legislative agendas as evidenced by these abortion and rape statements. Akin's statement and philosophy are consistent with conservative's deep mistrust of women and reflect the perverse contempt with which they simultaneously glorify sacrificial motherhood as the pinnacle of a woman's existence -- a long standing theme in Christian culture, while denigrating actual women though lies like these. Women, long portrayed as sub-human by culture, do not have to earn their abortions (or the contraception for that matter) through pain -- illness, incest, rape. Women, in theory, have the right to bodily autonomy, privacy and equal protection under the law. It is really interesting to consider his language: he refers to "the rapist" and "the child" but never to "the girl" or "the woman." Instead, the girl or woman -- the actual person who is raped and seeking to end her unwilling, non-consensual, insemination -- is "the female body" - like some kind of machine or useful tool. And, I know, it's not just men. But, the women who support these arguments will die knowing that they contributed to the infinite harm done to children and other women by their support of these policies.

Say what you will about men like Paul Ryan and Rick Santorum -- both good examples of how red hat-envy can bend bright men's minds towards incoherence and inhumanity -- at least they have the courage to take their convictions to their logical conclusions -- even if they result in sentences like "Rape is a gift from God" and in the consignment of 9 year old girls to eternal hell while their rapists get to pass through the pearly gates. But, many people like Akin, rather than deal with the illogic of exceptions, find ways to downplay the instance, validity, painful reality, post-traumatic effects and pregnancy that result from rape.

As Garance Franke-Ruta pointed out yesterday in *The Atlantic*, these conservative rape memes have a long life. Take this doozy which she cites from 1995 when 71-year-old North Carolina state Rep. Henry Aldridge said: "The facts show that people who are raped -- who are truly raped -- the juices don't flow, the body functions don't work and they don't get pregnant. Medical authorities agree that this is a rarity, if ever." I highly recommend passing her piece along to anyone who doubts the long standing (at least in 20th century American political, versus loooonng standing classical Greek and Christian thought terms) use of these confused and ignorant statements by people responsible for distributing rights and justice in the country.

20120820-06	14:56	Art	Re: "Todd Akin: It's Not a War on Women, It's a War on Critical Thinking & Democracy" (reply to SteveB, above)
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She said no, but her eyes said yes.

20120820-11	16:55	SteveB	Re: "Todd Akin: It's Not a War on Women, It's a War on Critical Thinking & Democracy" (reply to Art, above)
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Then she's in the right place!

20120820-07	15:21	SteveB	"Facts, Huh! What Are They Good For? Absolutely Nothing."
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"Facts, Huh! What Are They Good For? Absolutely Nothing." by Paul Buchheit, NationofChange

Aug. 20, 2012, (<http://www.nationofchange.org/facts-huh-what-are-they-good-absolutely-nothing-1345468490>)

George Lakoff is right. Republicans are winning the language wars. As half of America is charmed into voting against their own interests, we progressives keep telling them the facts. Instead, we should be concerned about what Joe Romm calls "language intelligence," the ability to convince people of something by moving them both intellectually and emotionally. The Republicans do it so well. They've hijacked the big issues with inflammatory phrases like "class warfare" and "death tax." We have to learn to fight back.

For starters, we might pick some inflammatory phrases of our own. Like "class carnage," inflicted by the super-rich. And "ancestral theft," perpetrated by hustling modern-day entrepreneurs who take most of the profits from technological products developed through decades of public research.

Lakoff emphasizes the need to place words in conceptual frameworks, as Republicans do with "tax relief" to portray taxes as an undue burden that must be relieved. In this spirit, Mike Lofgren proposes that the negatively charged 'entitlements' be reframed as "earned benefits." After all, Americans pay for their retirement benefits.

Or how about the emotionally unstimulating "financial transaction tax"? Boring. In the framing world, the proposal for a tiny imposition on risky high-speed thousand-trillion-dollar trades should be called a "quadrillionaire's fee."

Romney and Ryan: R&R for the Rich

Walter Lippman, an early proponent of symbolic language, suggested that people are more likely to believe "the pictures in their heads" than actual facts. More recently, Drew Westen noted that voters are primarily influenced by their feelings toward the parties and their candidates.

So we progressives need to help Romney and Ryan come up with a good campaign buzzword. Perhaps "medikillers" or "billionaiders." Or, with apologies to Lewis Carroll, the Republican candidates could be called "jobbywhackers."

Wall Street: Once we loot, you're destitute

Language Intelligence is characterized by a few principles of usage, including brevity, repetition, repetition, and the use of metaphors and rhyme. That's good advice for fashioning a Wall Street slogan, like "Swindle or Dwindle."

And, with Wall Street on our minds, we can't overlook our beloved sayings and verses and adages, modernized for a new gilded age:

Nation in plight, banker's delight, slapped with a warning: nation in mourning.

As progressives, we find it hard to resist the facts, because they generally support our side. But if we're really smart, we have to learn how to make the facts more appealing to the people who need to hear them.

20120820-08	15:59	SteveG	"GOP Consultant: Koch Brothers Bought Ryan's Nomination with \$100 Million Promise"
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"GOP Consultant: Koch Brothers Bought Ryan's Nomination with \$100 Million Promise" by Joe Conason, *The National Memo*

Aug. 18, 2012, (<http://www.nationalmemo.com/gop-consultant-koch-brothers-bought-ryans-nomination-with-100-million-promise/>)

Veteran Republican political consultant, unrepentant dirty trickster, and recently reborn libertarian Roger Stone yesterday published a startling accusation against Paul Ryan and Mitt Romney on his personal website, The Stone Zone. According to Stone, the billionaire Koch brothers purchased the Republican vice presidential nomination for Ryan from Romney in late July by promising to fork over an additional \$100 million toward "independent expenditure" campaigning for the GOP ticket.

Any such transaction would represent a serious violation of federal election laws and perhaps other statutes, aside from the ethical and character implications for all concerned. Although Stone is not the most reputable figure, to put it mildly, he has been a Republican insider, with access to the party's top figures, over four decades. His credentials date back to Nixon's Committee to Reelect the President and continue through the Reagan White House, the hard-fought Bush campaigns, and the Florida fiasco in 2000, when he masterminded the "Brooks Brothers riot" that shut down the Bush-Gore recount in Miami-Dade. Peruse his site and you'll see his greatest hits and the attention he has drawn from major publications. (<http://www.stonezone.com>)

I've known Roger personally for years and always considered him intelligent and amusing; also extremely dangerous and even erratic. Sometimes I've been surprised by how much he knows about the inner-most workings of his party – even when he is clearly *persona non grata* among the current power elite.

Here is how Stone led his latest post, headlined "The Paul Ryan Selection," which also delivers an amusing swipe at a certain Fox News analyst:

I've waited a few days to lay out my analysis of the selection of Paul Ryan for the VP slot on the Romney ticket. Unlike politicians like Dick Morris who badmouths the selection privately and shills for it publicly, I'll tell you what I really think. My sources tell me David Koch played a key role in Ryan's selection and that Koch's wife Julia had been quietly lobbying for Ryan. The selection was cemented at the July 22nd fundraiser Koch held for Romney at the former's sumptuous Hamptons estate. Koch pledged \$100 million more to C-4 and Super PAC efforts for Romney [in exchange] for Ryan's selection.

When he mentions "C-4," of course, Stone is referring to the tax-exempt non-profit groups recognized by the IRS under section 501-C-4 of federal tax law – such as Americans for Prosperity, a group largely backed by the Koch brothers that has so far spent nearly \$20 million on this year's campaign. The C-4 groups, including another known as Crossroads GPS run by Karl Rove, need not disclose their rich donors, while Super PACs do. This year, the right-wing C-4s are outspending all the Super-PACS combined, as Pro Publica reported recently.

As a declared supporter of Libertarian Party presidential candidate Gary Johnson, the former governor of New Mexico, Stone is grinding a sizeable ax, as always. He goes on to denigrate the idea that Ryan is a libertarian, despite his declared idolatry of the late Ayn Rand. Not much more can be said about Stone's stark allegations, unless more evidence emerges to confirm them. But there is nevertheless a ring of candor in Stone's story, tying the plutocratic Kochs to the plutocratic ticket of Romney-Ryan.

What he has written amounts to a gleeful felony indictment of everyone involved. Will any of them demand a retraction or even issue a denial?

20120820-10	16:31	SteveM	Video: "Hit the Road, Barack" & Laundry List of Obama's Failures
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A laundry list of Obama failures:

- The net loss of private-sector jobs. [Don't forget the public sector too! –SteveB]
- The addition of 3.6 million Americans to Social Security's disability roles (a way of concealing unemployment realities).
- GDP growth that slowed to a 1.8% crawl in 2011. [Gee, at least it grew! –SteveB]
- Chronically high unemployment.
- A much-vaunted and equally despised health-care reform law.
- A \$5 trillion increase to the national debt.

[That's all you could come up with? –SteveB]

Video: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gWLWuOptLzY&feature=player_embedded.

20120820-12	17:10	SteveB	Re: Laundry List of Obama's Failures (reply to SteveM, above)
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Your laundry list was all caused by Bush and his buddies, with solutions prevented by Republicans in Congress.

As much as Republicans might hope and pray, I haven't forgotten!

20120820-13	17:30	SteveM	Re: Laundry List of Obama's Failures (reply to SteveB, above)
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Wrong, dummy! Congress and the Senate were controlled by the Democrats from Jan 07 to Jan 11, 4 f*cking years, dummy!

BHO was a Senator, and Harry and Nancy ran the Show. Obama did more to reverse the fortunes of the Dem's from Jan 09 to Nov 10 than anyone before him. Man up, dummy!

"The arc of history is long, but it always bends towards justice." [Funny you don't give Dr. King credit for this quote. -SteveB]

[20120820-16](#) 19:35 SteveB Re: Laundry List of Obama's Failures (reply to SteveM, above)

Can you spell filibuster?

As for the rest, I simply do not agree. President Obama looks a lot like a Republican to me, just not quite as bad. :-)

[20120820-19](#) 21:29 SteveM Re: Laundry List of Obama's Failures (reply to SteveB, above)

They didn't have a problem forcing Obamacare down our throats, makes your filibuster argument pretty lame. Why do you even try?

[20120820-20](#) 22:17 SteveB Re: Laundry List of Obama's Failures (reply to SteveM, above)

Obamacare...the only thing they did and it's a good thing.

[20120820-14](#) 17:32 SteveM Fw: Obama's Daughters are 'Senior Staffers' & "Judicial Watch Obtains Documents Detailing the Cost to Taxpayers for Michelle Obama's Family Trip to Africa"

How do you like this bit of deception from the "most open administration in history"??

[Source of original email unknown. -SteveB]

Obama's Daughters are 'Senior Staffers'

Who says we don't have royalty?

I guess the *Boston Globe* and the *NY times* must have forgotten to print this. OBAMA'S DAUGHTERS ARE 'SENIOR STAFFERS'? By Judicial Watch this March. And the administration (the most open administration in history) had to be sued to get this through the Freedom Of Information act. Way to go Judicial Watch.

Michelle Obama Listed Daughters As "Senior Staffers" To Justify Expensive African Vacation and Safari

October 5, 2011 Judicial Watch said the U.S. Air Force provided a C-32 (a Boeing 757) modified by the military for the purpose of flying big-wigs around the world – to fly the First Lady and her entourage to and from Africa, at a cost of \$424,142. Another \$928.44 was listed as "bulk food" costs of providing 192 onboard meals for the 21 people who made the trip. The Obama daughters were listed on the manifest as "senior staff." "This junket wasted tax dollars and the resources of our overextended military. No wonder we had to sue to pry loose this information." The nation is suffering with the economy sputtering, the national debt soaring and Obama's economic rescue policies not only failing but actively making things worse. Meanwhile, the First Lady justifies an expensive trip to Africa to take a vacation and safari with her daughters by saying it's "official business" and even going so far as to

list her children as "staffers." The level of arrogance and dishonesty on display here is nothing short of shocking. But, er, "hope for change" and "yes we can."

It's a true story. Check out this link:

"Judicial Watch Obtains Documents Detailing the Cost to Taxpayers for Michelle Obama's Family Trip to Africa" by Judicial Watch

Oct. 4, 2011, (<http://www.judicialwatch.org/press-room/press-releases/judicial-watch-obtains-documents-detailing-the-cost-to-taxpayers-for-michelle-obama-s-family-trip-to-africa/>)

(Charges for the Aircraft and Crew Alone Amount to \$424,142.)

(WASHINGTON) Judicial Watch, the [RIGHT-WING! –SteveB] organization that investigates and fights government corruption, announced today that it has obtained mission expense records and passenger manifests from the United States Air Force related to the June 21-27, 2011, trip taken by First Lady Michelle Obama, her family and her staff to South Africa and Botswana. Judicial Watch obtained the documents pursuant to an August 19, 2011, Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) lawsuit (Judicial Watch v. U.S. Air Force (No. 11-1496)). Judicial Watch is investigating the purpose and itinerary of the trip as well as a breakdown of the costs to taxpayers.

On June 28, 2011, Judicial Watch filed a FOIA request seeking the mission taskings, transportation records, and passenger manifests for Michelle Obama's Africa trip. Documents were only provided after Judicial Watch filed suit:

- According to U.S. Department of Defense's published hourly rates for the C-32A aircraft used for the trip, Judicial Watch calculated the total cost to American taxpayers was \$424,142 for use of the aircraft (34.8 flight hours x \$12,188 per hour). (The C-32 is a specially configured military version of the Boeing 757.) Other expenses – meals (off the plane), transportation, security, various services, etc. – have yet to be disclosed.
- The passenger manifests confirm the presence of Obama's daughter's, Malia and Sasha on the trip. The two girls are listed as "Senior Staff." The manifests also list Mrs. Obama's mother, Marian Robinson, and niece and nephew, Leslie and Avery Robinson, as well Mrs. Obama's makeup and hairstylist (Carl Ray and Johnny Wright).
- The expense records also show \$928.44 was spent for "bulk food" purchases on flight. Overall, during the trip, 192 meals were served for the 21 passengers on board.

The professed purpose of Michelle Obama's trip to South Africa and Botswana was to encourage young people living in the two growing democracies to become involved in national affairs; and during her scheduled stops in Pretoria and Cape Town, South Africa and in Gaborone, the capital of Botswana, the First Lady used the opportunity to speak on education, health and wellness issues. The trip also included such tourist events as visits to historical landmarks and museums, plus a nonworking chance to spend time with Nelson Mandela, a meeting that Mrs. Obama described as "surreal." The trip ended with a private family safari at a South African game reserve before the group returned to Washington on June 27. "This trip was as much an opportunity for the Obama family to go on a safari as it was a trip to conduct government business," said Judicial Watch President Tom Fitton. "This junket wasted tax dollars and the resources of our overextended military. No wonder we had to sue to pry loose this information."

20120820-17	19:49	SteveB	Re: Obama's Daughters are 'Senior Staffers' (reply to SteveM, above)
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This is old BS and the original article pretty much indicates the whole thing is no big deal (even in a right-wing rag):

<http://www.usnews.com/news/blogs/washington-whispers/2011/10/04/michelle-obamas-africa-vacation-cost-more-than-432142>.

Take a look at how much money Bush wasted invading Iraq and going on vacations to Walker Point in Kennebunkport, Maine. Why, the Secret Service alone must have cost...

The First Lady should be able to take her daughters on a good-will vacation to Africa. Period. More power to her.

Whatever happened to "American exceptionalism"?

20120820-21 23:59 SteveB Photo: Blackstock Stadium, DePauw University, Greencastle, Indiana

<http://www.depauw.edu/athletics/facilities/blackstock-stadium/>



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

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FRIENDS OF THE MIDDLE NEWSLETTER #209 — AUG. 22, 2012

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

INDEX: Click here.

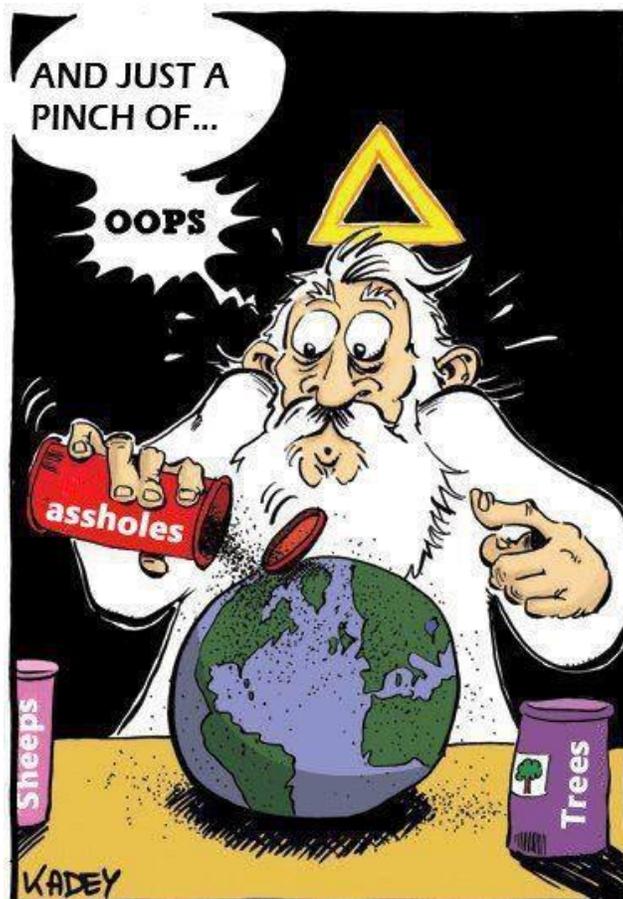
God vs. the GOP?

(posted by Steven W. Baker / SteveB, Aug. 22, 2012)

Maybe this is what "intelligent design" really means... Is there a special place in Hell for hypocrites after all?

"Signs of Divine Intervention for Republicans?" by Dana Milbank, *The Washington Post*

Aug. 21, 2012, (http://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/dana-milbank-are-republicans-getting-a-sign-from-above/2012/08/21/3424ba0a-ebd2-11e1-9ddc-340d5efb1e9c_story.html)



Has God forsaken the Republican Party?

Well, sit in judgment of what's happened in the past few days:

- A report comes out that a couple dozen House Republicans engaged in an alcohol-induced frolic, in one case nude, in the Sea of Galilee, where Jesus is believed to have walked on water, calmed the storm and, nearby, turned water into wine and performed the miracle of the loaves and fishes.
- Rep. Todd Akin, Missouri's Republican nominee for Senate, suggests there is such a thing as "legitimate rape" and purports that women's bodies have mysterious ways to repel the seed of rapists. He spends the next 48 hours rejecting GOP leaders' demands that he quit the race.
- Weather forecasts show that a storm, likely to grow into Hurricane Isaac, may be chugging toward...Tampa, where Republicans will open their quadrennial nominating convention on Monday.

Coincidence? Or part of some Intelligent Design?

By their own logic, Republicans and their conservative allies should be concerned that Isaac is a form of divine retribution. Last year, Rep. Michele Bachmann, then a Republican presidential candidate, said that the East Coast earthquake and Hurricane Irene — another "I" storm, but not an Old Testament one — were attempts by God "to get the attention of the politicians." In remarks later termed a "joke," she said: "It's time for an act of God and we're getting it."

The influential conservative broadcaster Glenn Beck said last year that the Japanese earthquake and tsunami were God's "message being sent" to that country. A year earlier, Christian broadcaster and former GOP presidential candidate Pat Robertson tied the Haitian earthquake to that country's "pact to the devil."

Previously, Robertson had argued that Hurricane Katrina was God's punishment for abortion, while the Rev. John Hagee said the storm was God's way of punishing homosexuality. The late Jerry Falwell thought that God allowed the Sept. 11 attacks as retribution for feminists and the ACLU.

Even if you don't believe God uses meteorological phenomena to express His will, it's difficult for mere mortals to explain what is happening to the GOP just now.

By most earthly measures, President Obama has no business being reelected. No president since World War II has won reelection with the unemployment rate north of 7.4 percent. Of the presidents during that time who were returned to office, GDP growth averaged 4.7 percent during the first nine months of the election year — more than double the current rate.

But instead of being swept into office by the worst economic recovery since the Great Depression, Republicans are in danger of losing an election that is theirs to lose. Mitt Romney, often tone-deaf, has allowed Obama to change the subject to Romney's tax havens and tax returns. And congressional Republicans are providing all kinds of reasons for Americans to doubt their readiness to assume power.

The Politico report Sunday about drunken skinny-dipping in the Sea of Galilee gave House Republicans an unwanted image of debauchery — a faint echo of the Capitol page scandal that, breaking in September 2006, cemented Republicans' fate in that November's elections. The 30 Republican lawmakers on the "fact-finding" mission to Israel last summer earned a rebuke from Majority Leader Eric Cantor and attracted the attention of the FBI. The naked congressman, Rep. Kevin Yoder (R-Kan.), admitted in a statement: "[R]egrettably I jumped into the water without a swimsuit."

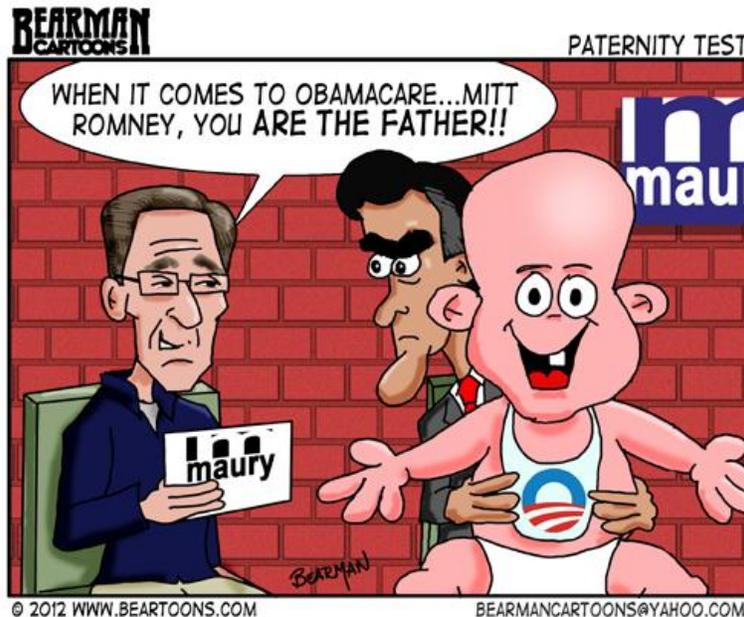
A boozy frolic at a Christian holy site might have been a considerable embarrassment for the party, but it was eclipsed by a bigger one: Akin's preposterous claim on a St. Louis TV program that pregnancy is rare after a "legitimate rape" because "the female body has ways to try to shut that whole thing down."

Republican leaders spent the next 48 hours trying to shut Akin's whole thing down, but after a period of panic (a no-show on Piers Morgan's show led the CNN host to show his empty chair and call him a "gutless little twerp"), Akin told radio host Mike Huckabee on Tuesday that he would fight the "big party people" and stay in the race.

The big party people had a further complication: In Tampa on Tuesday, those drafting the GOP platform agreed to retain a plank calling for a constitutional amendment banning abortion without specifying exceptions for cases of rape. In other words, the Akin position.

For a party that should be sailing toward victory, there were all the makings of a perfect storm. And, sure enough: Tuesday afternoon, the National Weather Service forecast that "Tropical Depression Nine" would strengthen into a hurricane, taking a northwesterly track over Cuba on Sunday morning — just as Republicans are arriving in Florida.

What happens next? God only knows.



My beautiful grandchildren, Zachary and Natalie, on the first day of First Grade for Zach. I have no idea what happened to all the boy's teeth—he used to have some. Zach loves trains and wants to be a "train engineer". Natalie swims like a fish, and could she be any cuter in her little sun dress? I love their fake "camera smiles"!



Snake oil or Ryan's Medicare!

"The Real Medicare Question" by Eugene Robinson, *The Washington Post*

Aug. 16, 2012, (http://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/eugene-robinson-the-real-medicare-question/2012/08/16/7cc8038a-e7b7-11e1-936a-b801f1abab19_story.html)

Republicans and Democrats are being equally nasty in their campaign rhetoric, but they're not being equally truthful. To cite one example, much of what the GOP is saying about Medicare simply isn't supported by the facts.

Former New Hampshire governor John Sununu, one of Mitt Romney's more pugnacious surrogates, almost had a conniption fit Tuesday when CNN's Soledad O'Brien pressed him on his assertion that President Obama "gutted Medicare by taking \$717 billion out of it." As Sununu knows but refused to acknowledge, this is not true.

The claim is part of an attempt to shore up a vulnerability Romney created by choosing Paul Ryan as his running mate. The budget that Ryan authored, and persuaded House Republicans to pass, would eventually change Medicare into a voucher program: Seniors would be given a certain amount of money each year to buy health insurance.

If that amount isn't enough to pay for the kind of coverage you want or need — under Ryan's latest plan, you could buy a policy from a private insurer or buy Medicare from the government — you pay the difference out of pocket. According to the Congressional Budget Office, the average Medicare recipient would pay an extra \$6,500 a year.

It doesn't take a genius to recognize the political problem this causes for Romney, especially in states where older voters are a key voting bloc. The Romney campaign decided to deal with the anticipated Democratic onslaught by striking first with the claim that it is Obama, not Romney, who wants to take away your Medicare.

Like many lies, this one uses a grain of truth as raw material. The Affordable Care Act, otherwise known as Obamacare, slows the rate of growth of payments to Medicare service providers by more than \$700 billion over a decade. But no impact is felt by seniors themselves, whose benefits and costs remain the same.

When O'Brien reminded Sununu of these facts, he barked that she should "put an Obama bumper sticker on your forehead." But the claim that Obama had "gutted Medicare" remained false, and O'Brien told Sununu: "You can't just repeat it and make it true, sir."

Sununu knows that. He just wants the focus to be on Romney's pledge to undo Medicare "cuts" that aren't really cuts at all. The Romney campaign knows that as long as people are trying to sort out the facts of this specific allegation, they aren't talking about the real differences between the two parties on the very nature of entitlement programs such as Medicare.

Ryan's plan — which Romney has semi-endorsed and now cannot credibly disown — effectively would "end Medicare as we know it" — the phrase voters will hear a bazillion times between now and Election Day, especially those who live in Florida. This is one piece of campaign rhetoric that happens to be true.

Medicare as we know it is a form of social insurance, a guarantee that citizens over 65 will have adequate medical care regardless of how healthy they are or how much money they have. Medicare, as the GOP wants it to be, is a voucher program that will be adequate for some seniors and inadequate for others.

Ryan prefers the term "premium support" to describe his plan. But as Gertrude Stein surely would have noted, a voucher is a voucher is a voucher.

Everyone agrees that something has to be done about skyrocketing costs for Medicare and Medicaid, the health-care program for the poor. Obama took the first step toward "bending the curve" of cost increases with the Affordable Care Act. Leave aside, for the moment, the fact that Romney now pledges to undo the progress Obama has made. The question is what do we want Medicare to be?

There is no reason Medicare cannot be reformed as social insurance. Other industrialized countries provide universal health coverage for their entire populations for a fraction of what we spend in the United States, and those other countries achieve equal or better health outcomes. Surely we can continue to do so for those of retirement age — if we still want to.

The question to ask Romney is whether he believes in social insurance — whether his objections to the way Obama has begun to reform Medicare are fiscal or ideological. Ask him and Ryan whether they agree that markets are often efficient but seldom compassionate. Ask him whether he sees the free market as our servant or our master.

Thanks. Great article.

Maybe the best summary I have read on this latest issue of Medicare and the magical \$700B. What bothers me is this concept of distortion of the facts is becoming more and more prevalent and no one seems to be outraged. It's like, 'This is what I want to believe, therefore it is'. Not good science nor good planning for the future.

OUR grandkids!

"A Cheat Sheet to What Makes Today's College Freshmen Click" by Mary Beth Marklein, *USA Today*

Aug. 21, 2012, (<http://www.usatoday.com/news/education/story/2012-08-21/class-2016-college-freshmen-mindset-list/57171478/1?csp=34news>)

For this year's crop of college freshmen, Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis and Kurt Cobain have always been dead, women have always piloted warplanes and space shuttles, and M&Ms have never been tan.

The class of 2016 grew up in cyberspace, a factor that has increasingly influenced how today's undergraduates approach the world, authors of two recent works say.

These cultural touchstones are part of a 100-item "Mindset List," released Tuesday by Beloit College, that describes what "normal" looks like for students born in 1994. Produced annually since 1998 as a cheat sheet to help faculty avoid making outdated references, the Mindset Lists have evolved into a catalog of generational change.

In a companion guide published for the first time this year, list creators Ron Nief and Tom McBride say members of the fall 2012 entering class are addicted to all things electronic and "think nothing of texting a friend whom they know is only a block away."

Nief and McBride stress that they're drawing a portrait of the incoming class, not judging it. Still, many of their observations parallel those in a book, to be published in September, that takes a starker view.

In *Generation on a Tightrope: A Portrait of Today's College Student*, authors Arthur Levine and Diane Dean conclude that today's undergraduates are electronically far more sophisticated than their parents or teachers, yet woefully unprepared for the real world. The authors characterize them as coddled, entitled and dependent.

"This is a generation with an average of 241 social media friends, but they have trouble communicating in person," says Levine, president of the Woodrow Wilson National Fellowship Foundation and author of two previous books about college students.

The book and this year's Mindset List note the impact of the worldwide recession. Today's freshmen have "entered college with questions about jobs, whether the college degree has value," Nief says. "Their attitude toward life in America and the future is different from those of just a few years before."

The Mindset List has drawn the attention not only of educators but of police departments, military services and employers. At NASA's Goddard Space Flight Center, this year's Mindset Lists will be featured in a leadership conference open to employees who span four generations.

"We want everybody to increase their awareness and understanding of what makes generations unique and different, so that we can better work together," says Gail Williams, who is coordinating the program.

Other items on the Mindset List for the Class of 2016:

- Exposed bra straps have always been a fashion statement, not a wardrobe malfunction.
- Gene therapy has always been an available treatment.
- Bill Clinton is a senior statesman of whose presidency they have little knowledge.
- They have lived in an era of instant stardom and self-proclaimed celebrities, famous for being famous.
- They watch television everywhere, but on a television.
- Their folks have never gazed with pride on a new set of bound encyclopedias on the bookshelf.

(Source: Mindset List, Beloit College)

20120821-05	10:37	SteveM	Re: Laundry List of Obama's Failures (reply to SteveB, FotM Newsletter #208)
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Congress is controlled by the Democrats for 4 years and all they can do pass a much despised health-care reform law? Which has a direct impact in the net loss of private-sector jobs, the addition of 3.6 million Americans to Social Security's disability roles (a way of concealing unemployment realities), GDP growth that slowed to a 1.8% crawl in 2011, chronically high unemployment, and a \$5 trillion increase to the national debt.

Do I have to spell it out for you every day? The Socialist ABM and policies are a failure, and even the liberals who supported him in the past have awakened and realized the Emperor has no clothes.

20120821-06	12:36	SteveB	Re: Laundry List of Obama's Failures (reply to SteveM, above)
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As I said, can you spell "filibuster"? And, since you choose to go back two more years, can you spell "Bush veto"?

Can you spell "DO-NOTHING REPUBLICAN CONGRESSMEN willing to destroy America just to defeat President Obama"?

20120821-17	15:56	SteveM	Re: Laundry List of Obama's Failures (reply to SteveB, above)
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More like a Geo Soros controlled Obama out to break the USA, stop drinking the cool aid.

20120821-07	13:53	Dale	"Romney Slightly Ahead in Wisconsin"
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This is a Democratic Polling Firm, by the way.

Despite the Obama smear campaign and vast spending on advertising, the wave is starting to move in the other direction. Start thinking about who you are going to blame after the election in November.

"Romney Slightly Ahead in Wisconsin" by Public Policy Polling

Aug. 21, 2012, (<http://www.publicpolicypolling.com/main/2012/08/romney-slightly-ahead-in-wisconsin.html>)

PPP's first Wisconsin poll since Mitt Romney announced Paul Ryan as his running mate finds him taking a small lead over Barack Obama in the state, 48-47. That represents a 7 point shift from PPP's last look at the state in early July, which found Obama ahead 50-44.

The biggest change Ryan's selection seems to have brought about is the unification of the GOP. Romney's gone from a 78 point lead with Republicans on our last poll (87-9) to now an 88 point lead with them (93-5). There's also been a tightening with independents. Obama still has a 4 point lead with them at 47-43, but that's down from a 14 point advantage at 53-39 six weeks ago. Democrats are unchanged from the previous poll.

Ryan isn't exactly a universally popular figure in his home state. 49% of voters have a favorable opinion of him to 45% with a negative one. But that does give him the best numbers of anybody on either ticket in the state. Obama has a 46% approval rating with 50% of voters disapproving of him, Romney has a 45/48 favorability rating, and Joe Biden stands at 41/48.

A big reason Wisconsin remains so competitive for the GOP is that the electorate looks like it will be considerably more Republican leaning than it was in 2008, reflecting the continued high energy level of the party's voters after its victory in June's recall election. We find an electorate that's 34% Republican and 32% Democratic. Exit polls in 2008 showed Democrats with a 6 point turnout advantage, 39% to 33%. Although the enthusiasm gap that plagued Democrats nationally in 2010 has dissipated some places, it appears to still be a real issue for them in Wisconsin.

Choosing Ryan as his running mate isn't giving Romney any trouble with seniors in Wisconsin. That's actually where his greatest strength is, leading Obama 52-43 with them. Which isn't to say the Ryan Plan is popular in Wisconsin-only 40% of voters support it to 46% who are opposed. But the concern with it is coming much more from young voters than seniors.

This could just be a bounce for Romney that will fade away as the election gets closer but for now Wisconsin looks very much like a swing state.

[20120821-11](#) 15:36 SteveB Re: "Romney Slightly Ahead in Wisconsin" (reply to Dale, above)

Good to hear from you. I hope you've been having a happy, eventful, and wet summer!

It's getting interesting and I'm worried about Wisconsin, that former bastion of liberalism and unions. Then again, Mr. O should have Florida to compensate. Virginia? Nevada? Colorado? The few states in question will mean huge battles there, and, hopefully, the other states won't be forgotten. Good thing for all that Super-PAC money, heh? What an aid to the democratic process.

Personally, I think Romney-AndAyn might peak around convention time, but it will be all downhill after that.

I guess we'll see. How 'bout we bet a dinner on it for when I come visit and stay at your house for two weeks next year?

[20120821-16](#) 15:55 Dale Re: "Romney Slightly Ahead in Wisconsin" (reply to SteveB, above)

:-)

[20120821-10](#) 15:22 Pam Re: "Romney Slightly Ahead in Wisconsin" (reply to Dale, above)

I think a lot will depend on luck, like weather and people believing their vote makes a difference. The mood of the country is so perverse right now, I wouldn't be surprised by a Romney victory. I fear we're in for a bumpy ride. I just hope and pray African-Americans, Latinos, and old people turn out in record numbers.

[20120821-12](#) 15:39 SteveB Re: "Romney Slightly Ahead in Wisconsin" (reply to Pam, above)

I hope something will happen to boost the enthusiasm of those groups. They seem a little shell-shocked right now.

20120821-20 18:29 Art Re: "Romney Slightly Ahead in Wisconsin" (reply to Dale, above)

Hi, Dale. Probably a little early to predict any wave but of course we have always realized that R&R might win. We are not going to "blame" anyone after the election. I believe strongly that the reason will be a persistence and disgusting streak of racism and bigotry in the country. That is the underlying strength of the Republican party today. It is all white and all biased. I know you don't agree but to paraphrase John Stuart Mill "not all conservatives are stupid but all stupid people are conservative". And to quote my mom, "you're known by the company that you keep."

I know you are not stupid but I cannot for the life of me understand how you support lairs and bigots. In just one week as a VP candidate Ryan lied about trying to steer stimulus funds to his district. When confronted with the letters he signed he punted. He then said President Obama had closed a automobile factory in his district. The factory was closed well before President Obama took office. Then Ryan claimed President Obama has stolen \$700B from Medicare. Also a distortion of the facts to say the kindest thing about that lie and also in the Ryan budget just to make it more fun. Three pretty outright lies in one week! Either Ryan is really stupid or he is a liar, seems to me. What bothers me most is he doesn't seem to be even phased when he gets caught with his fingers in the till.

Again we know you don't agree and you may win but so the NAZIs in 1929. Hate does prevail on occasion and everyone suffers.

Just how I see it.

20120821-21 19:16 SteveB Re: "Romney Slightly Ahead in Wisconsin" (reply to Art & Dale, above)

Kinda like Ryan was saying today — another 'inversion' of the truth, or 'the truth inside out':

(CARNEGIE, Pa.) **Paul Ryan said today that President Obama "sort of drops his veil" at times**, apparently suggesting the president doesn't always reveal his true beliefs. "Every now and then President Obama sort of drops his veil, he's less coy about his philosophy. He sort of reveals his true governing policy, what he really believes," Ryan said to a crowd of over 2,000 people. (<http://news.yahoo.com/ryan-says-obama-drops-veil-184047326--abc-news-politics.html>)

Obama drops his veil??? Which one? The Wall St. mole secret identity? LOL.

20120821-22 19:36 Pam Re: "Romney Slightly Ahead in Wisconsin" (reply to all, above)

Romney wants poor kids to borrow the money for college from their parents. Ryan wants everyone to start a small business and assumes, I guess, that most small businesses succeed. I am an educated, semi-competent person, but the thing that has always scared the beejeebers out of me is the idea of starting a business. That is a talent, like any other, and not everyone has it in equal measure. Why is "entrepreneurship" the great be-all and end-all? Don't most people just want a steady paycheck and the peace of mind to sleep at night? Our politicians praise risk-takers and disdain the cautious folks who don't want to gamble on the economy or anything else. I say, let the high-flyers soar, if that's what makes them happy, but recognize that the vast majority of us simply want to do a job, get paid a fair wage for it, and live a prudent life. Self-made men (and women, I suppose, though I think ruthless aggressiveness is more a male preserve) always think that if they did it, so can everyone else. I've always wondered about the value of "meritocracy." Yes, I want the best surgeons to operate on me and the best teachers in the classroom, but there needs to be a "respectable" place for ordinary people. They are the ones who will be quickest to become disillusioned and angry, which makes them prey to demagogues who flatter them into feeling bigger than they actually are. I've always had a soft spot for the English quality of down-playing one's work and finding satisfaction in a private activity.

It was great. Golden skin, pure white fish protein, soft as butter, perfectly flaky. Grilled asparagus. Grilled fennel bulb, and a tasty, zesty, slightly peppery tomato sauce with a delicious tapenade. Sorry to tattle and run, but I took yesterday off so Susette and I could return from our Sunday night San Antonio BB King concert at leisure, and there is much to do.



Seared Striper with Grilled Fennel and Asparagus



Paneer Makhani with Tomato Cashew Curry

20120821-13 15:40 SteveB Re: Today's Lunch at Apple (reply to Ben, above)

Did you take a sack lunch yesterday?

20120821-14 15:43 Ben Re: Today's Lunch at Apple (reply to SteveB, above)

Thanks for asking, but no, Susette and I drove down to San Antonio on Sunday to see BB King at the incredible Majestic Theater in S (Google the theater: built in 1928, its hall is a demented hallucination of Spanish Colonial Mushroom)

I took Monday off, so we could have a leisurely and well rested ride home.

Nevertheless, I earned myself a speeding ticket.

20120821-15 15:48 SteveB Re: Today's Lunch at Apple (reply to Ben, above)

F*cking pigs! Things never change.

20120821-19 16:08 Ben Re: Today's Lunch at Apple (reply to SteveB, above)

Aw, Steve; the cop was polite and doing his job. In fact, on that particular stretch, it's pretty wavy and uneven as interstates go, and traffic was pretty dense.

I am angry with myself, as I usually remember to stay below the 10-over mark inside any city's city limits. It's a \$180 plus bumper, but it's on my head. Really, although \$180 for 72-in-a-60 seems rather dear to me.

I am all empathy for polite cops: it's a boring job, it's a very dangerous job, and pulling folks over to the side of a narrow high-speed road with a minimal shoulder is scary in its own right, especially once the officer is out of his car. Besides, it really IS me and the others around me he's trying to protect.

Dude had a really slick very black, very un-marked Mustang, too. Bet he has a lot of fun with it!

20120821-09 15:03 SteveB "The Five Reasons Why the Ryan-Romney Economic Plan Would Be a Disaster for America"

"The Five Reasons Why the Ryan-Romney Economic Plan Would Be a Disaster for America" by Robert Reich, NationofChange

Aug. 21, 2012, (<http://www.nationofchange.org/five-reasons-why-ryan-romney-economic-plan-would-be-disaster-america-1345561944>)

Video: http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=cO1F7EcGFAC.

Mitt Romney hasn't provided details so we should be grateful he's selected as vice president a man with a detailed plan Romney says is "marvelous," "bold and exciting," "excellent," "much needed," and "consistent with" what he's put out.

So let's look at the five basic features of this "marvelous" Ryan plan:

1. It would boost unemployment because it slashes public spending next year and the year after, when the economy is still likely to need a boost, not a fiscal drag. It would be the same austerity trap now throwing

Europe into recession. According to the Economic Policy Institute, Ryan's plan would mean 1.3 million fewer jobs next year than otherwise, and 2.8 million fewer the year after.

2. Ryan would take from lower-income Americans and give to the rich – who already have the biggest share of America's total income and wealth in almost a century. His plan would raise taxes on families earning between 30 and 40 thousand dollars by almost \$500 a year, and slash programs like Medicare, food stamps, and children's health. What would Ryan do with these savings? Reduce taxes on millionaires by an average of over \$500,000 a year.

3. Ryan wants to turn Medicare into vouchers that won't keep up with the rising costs of health care – thereby shifting the burden onto seniors. By contrast, Obama's Affordable Care Act saves money on Medicare by reducing payments to medical providers like hospitals and drug companies.

4. He wants to add money to defense while cutting spending on education, infrastructure, and basic research and development. America already spends more on defense than the next five biggest military spenders put together. Our future productivity depends on the public investments Ryan wants to cut.

5. Ryan's budget doesn't even reduce the federal budget deficit – not for decades. Remember: He's adding to military spending, giving huge additional tax cuts to the very rich, and stifling economic growth by cutting spending too early. The Center for Budget and Policy Priorities estimates Ryan's Roadmap would push public debt to over 175 percent of GDP by 2050.

So there you have it. The Ryan – Ryan-ROMNEY – economic plan.

And the five reasons why it would be a disaster for America.

20120821-18	16:06	SteveM	"Our Next Vice President?"
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"Our Next Vice President?" by JustCommonSense, Lost in America

Aug. 13, 2012, (<http://justcommonsense-lostinamerica.blogspot.com/2012/08/our-next-vice-president.html>)

Well, early Saturday morning we learned that Congressman Paul Ryan, Republican from Wisconsin, is to be Mitt Romney's pick for the next Vice President of The United States.

What are we to think of this selection? He's not a graduate of Columbia University. He's not a graduate of Harvard. He wasn't selected as the President of the Harvard Law Review. He didn't get a special free quota scholarship ride to any prestigious university and, instead, had to work his way through Miami University of Ohio. For God's sake the man drove the Oscar Mayer Wiener Truck one summer and waited tables another!

One morning when Paul Ryan was sixteen years old he went in to wake his father up and found him dead of a heart attack. He didn't write two books about that experience. Instead, he assumed the role of adult at an early age, never having the luxury to pursue youthful drug use and the art of socialist revolution.

Instead, Paul Ryan and his mother took his grandmother, suffering from Alzheimers, into the household and served as the primary care provider for his grandma. His grandma wasn't the Vice President of the Bank of Hawaii so she could offer nothing in return, except the element of "need".

Once Paul Ryan got his BA in Economics from Miami University of Ohio he was hired as a staff economist in Wisconsin Senator Kastin's office. The job must have not paid well because young Ryan moonlighted as a waiter and fitness trainer. No one offered him a "token honor" position at the University of Chicago and a \$200,000 dollar a year salary.

When a still young Paul Ryan returned to Wisconsin to run for Congress he didn't demonize his opponent and dig up dirt to shovel against him. He waited until the standing Congressman vacated the office before seeking the office.

In Janesville, Wisconsin they don't have a big political machine to promote you, to criminalize your opponent; instead Paul Ryan had to go door to door and sit at kitchen tables and listen to his future constituents.

After getting elected to Congress Paul Ryan didn't triumphantly march into Washington, buy himself a Georgetown townhouse and proceed over to K Street to rub elbows with lobbyists. He bunked in his Congressional office and used the house gym for showers and a fresh change of clothes.

Paul Ryan then married and took his bride back to Janesville. He lives on the same street he lived on as a kid and shares the neighborhood with eight other members of the Ryan clan. He hunts with the local Janesville hunt club and attends PTA meetings and other civic functions.

For those who can't make those public functions, Paul Ryan bought an old bread truck, converted it into a "mobile constituent office" and drives around to meet with those who need his help and attention.

No, I don't know if we can vote for a guy like this. He doesn't have a regal pedigree; he's Irish for God's sake! No one awarded him a Nobel Peace Prize two months after getting elected. No one threw flowers or got "chills down their leg" as he took his seat in Congress.

What is most despicable about Paul Ryan is that he has had the nerve to write the House Budget for three years in a row. He's is brazen and heartless in advocating in that budget for a \$5 trillion dollar reduction in federal spending over the next ten years! The House passed his budget three years in a row and three years in a row the Democratically controlled Senate has let it die in the upper house, without ever proposing a budget of their own. What is wrong with this guy? If Congress were to cut \$5 trillion dollars from the budget where would the President get the money to give \$500 million dollars to a bankrupt Solyndra? Or \$200 million dollars for bankrupt Energy 1? Or \$11 billion dollars to illegal aliens filing INIT, non-resident tax returns to claim \$11 billion big ones in child tax credits, even for their children living in Mexico?

I don't know. Paul Ryan seems heartless to me. He keeps wanting to cut government waste, he keeps wanting to put a halt to those big GSA conventions in Vegas and, worse, he keeps trying to make people look at that \$16.7 trillion dollar deficit! The guy's no fun at all!

Who wants a numbers cruncher? Who wants someone spoiling the party by showing folks the bill? Nothing will spoil a party quicker than sending the host the bill before the party's over.

Party Hearty folks! At least until November.

20120821-23 20:19 Art Re: NRA Video: "Borderless!" (reply to SteveM, FotM Newsletter #208)
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Interesting. I've been very busy rescuing dogs, so don't have the time to respond to all of this but I certainly appreciate your passion and interest in this issue. We may have gotten a little off subject somewhere along the line, but I will definitely defer to your experience and focus on the border. I don't really have many details about the few friends I have along the border and most of them are ex-military combat veterans, so they may view things from a slightly different viewpoint. Bottom line is you live there, so you have a first-hand experience base none of us can truly know unless we live there also.

Having said that, the issue I was focusing on was guns and the facts, as I understand them. We buy the drugs the cartels move north and sell them guns in return. I have no idea what congressional records you're referring to with regard to gun sales to Mexican cartel members, but, even if we accept his figures that only 20% come from the US, how does that happen? That's still a lot of guns.

As you also say, this has been going on for 40 years (I think much longer), so how can we hold the current Administration responsible for all the mayhem? 40 years covers a lot of Republican presidents also. I agree it is ugly and has become more ugly primarily because of guns and the mayhem that comes with them. What's the solution? FYI if someone wants to come north and visit the nation's capitol, I'll take you north of 14th street at night and drop you off and let's see how well you do getting home. Point being there is ugliness everywhere made

so much more lethal because of the proliferation of guns. Thanks largely to the NRA, anyone can buy a semi-automatic assault rifle and 100-round magazines as easily as they can buy a bag of potato chips.

[20120821-24](#) 21:54 SteveG

Book: *The Parties Versus the People: How to Turn Republicans & Democrats into Americans*

The Parties Versus the People: How to Turn Republicans and Democrats into Americans, by Mickey Edwards, Yale University Press, 2012, (<http://yalepress.yale.edu/yupbooks/book.asp?isbn=9780300184563>)

America's political system is dysfunctional. While this is a widely held view, it is a problem that—so far—has proved intractable. After every election, voters discover yet again that political "leaders" are simply quarreling in a never-ending battle between the two warring tribes, the Republicans and Democrats. In this critically important book, a distinguished statesman and thinker identifies exactly how our political and governing systems reward intransigence, discourage compromise, and undermine our democracy. He then describes exactly what must be done to banish the negative effects of partisan warfare from our political system.

As a former congressman, Mickey Edwards witnessed firsthand how important legislative battles can devolve into struggles not over principle but over party advantage. He offers graphic examples of how this problem has intensified and reveals how political battles have become nothing more than conflicts between party machines. Edwards's solutions—specific, practical, fair, and original—show the way to break the stranglehold of the political party system. *The Parties Versus the People* offers hope for a fundamental renewal of American democracy.

Mickey Edwards, a congressman for sixteen years and a faculty member at Harvard and Princeton for the subsequent sixteen years, is a vice president of the Aspen Institute. He has been a columnist for the *Los Angeles Times*, *Chicago Tribune*, and other newspapers, and he broadcasts a weekly commentary on National Public Radio's "All Things Considered". He writes an online column for the *Atlantic*.

[20120821-25](#) 21:57 SteveG

Video Interview: "Mickey Edwards Urges Congress, Before Party Affiliation Be 'an American First'"

Video (Aug. 21, 2012, PBS NewsHour): http://www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/politics/july-dec12/edwards_08-21.html.

Mickey Edwards, former Republican congressman, rails against political division in Washington in his new book, *The Parties Versus the People*. Edwards talks to Judy Woodruff about his suggestions to reform party hostility and create "one congress serving one country."

[Source of original email unknown. –SteveB]



The skunk has replaced the Eagle as the new symbol of the American Presidency. It is half black, half white, and everything it does stinks

[I don't think so! –SteveB]



The name given to President Obama by a gathering of the American Indian Nation, July 7, 2012.

[20120821-27](#) 11:37 SteveM Video: Steve Bridges as President Obama

You may remember Steve Bridges as the guy who imitated George Bush so well on the Jay Leno Show. He has now started imitating Obama and REALLY does it really well. The Administration has tried to put a stop to Bridges' act, because Obama has made it known that he is deeply offended. Yes, he's that good.....

Steve Bridges as President Obama – Aug., 2011:

http://www.youtube.com/watch_popup?feature=player_embedded&v=WH_a0cGVRmI.

[20120821-32](#) 23:42 SteveB Re: Steve Bridges as President Obama (reply to SteveM, above)

Pretty funny! Possibly racist, but funny, and not unsympathetic to the President.

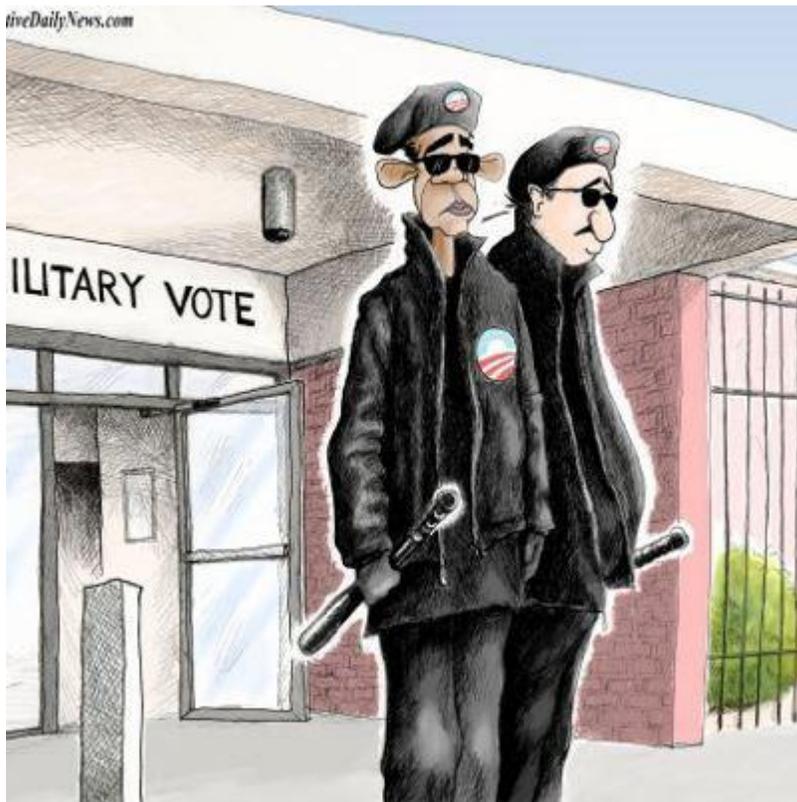
[20120821-28](#) 22:48 Tom There, I Fixed It. (Redneck)

Very Funny!

<http://failblog.cheezburger.com/thereifixedit>

[20120821-29](#) 23:10 Tom Cartoon: New Black Panthers 2012

Stopping the Military Vote! It has Begun:



20120821-33 23:54 SteveB Re: Cartoon: New Black Panthers 2012 (reply to Tom, above)

Tom, I can't believe you'd honestly want wishy-washy Mitt as your CIC! Obama has proven himself to be a steady hand, and the military must be reduced, not enlarged. Mitt certainly ain't the man to do that, with his huge campaign debt to the Kochs hanging over his scruple-less head.

He doesn't know what to do in a campaign, let alone as POTUS. I have no idea why he thinks he wants the job, knowing nothing about government or the world, as he has proven.

Always appreciate your thoughts.

20120821-30 23:21 Tom "Military Vet Detained for Psych Evaluation over Anti-Government Facebook Posts"

When you see them come for me, it is too late for you.

Psychiatric evaluations and detention used by the (old) Soviet Union, Cuba, Venezuela, Red China, and other Totalitarian/Communist countries, is a very common tactic used to silence political enemies. We are seeing this technique being used increasingly by our "homeland security!"

Y'all be careful about what you write on the internet, it seems that Big Brother just might be watching.

"Military Vet Detained for Psych Evaluation over Anti-Government Facebook Posts" by AP, CBS DC

Aug. 21, 2012, (<http://washington.cbslocal.com/2012/08/21/military-vet-detained-for-psych-evaluation-over-anti-government-facebook-posts/>)

(RICHMOND, Va.) A former Marine involuntarily detained for psychiatric evaluation for posting strident anti-government messages on Facebook has received an outpouring of support from people who say authorities are trampling on his First Amendment rights.

Brandon J. Raub, 26, has been in custody since FBI and Secret Service agents and Chesterfield County police questioned him Thursday evening about what they considered ominous posts talking of a coming revolution. In one message earlier this month, Raub wrote: "Sharpen my axe; I'm here to sever heads."

Police — acting under a state law that allows emergency, temporary psychiatric commitments upon the recommendation of a mental health professional — took Raub to the John Randolph Medical Center in Hopewell. He was not charged with any crime.

The Rutherford Institute, a Charlottesville-based civil liberties group, sent one of its attorneys to the hospital to represent Raub at a hearing Monday. A judge ordered Raub detained for another month, Rutherford executive director John Whitehead said.

"For government officials to not only arrest Brandon Raub for doing nothing more than exercising his First Amendment rights but to actually force him to undergo psychological evaluations and detain him against his will goes against every constitutional principle this country was founded upon," Whitehead said. "This should be a wake-up call to Americans that the police state is here."

Raub's mother, Cathleen Thomas, said she was not surprised by her son's plight.

"We're seeing our government overstepping its bounds again and again on the Constitution," she said in a telephone interview. "The bottom line is his freedom of speech has been violated. It was his patriotic right and duty to make those grievances known."

Thomas said her son, who served tours as a combat engineer in Iraq and Afghanistan, is “concerned about all the wars we’ve experienced” and believes the U.S. government was complicit in the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks. One of his Facebook posts, she said, pictured the gaping hole in the Pentagon and asked “where’s the plane?”

“I want the country to know who he is — that he’s not crazy, he’s a staunch patriot,” Thomas said.

Whitehead said he found nothing alarming on in Raub’s social media commentaries.

“The posts I read that supposedly were of concern were libertarian-type posts I see all the time, so I don’t know what supposedly triggered this,” he said. “I see worse stuff.”

The big concern, Whitehead said, is that government officials are apparently monitoring citizens’ private Facebook pages and arresting people with whom they disagree.

Dee Rybiski, an FBI spokeswoman in Richmond, said there was no Facebook snooping by her agency.

“We received quite a few complaints about what were perceived as threatening posts,” she said. “Given the circumstances with the things that have gone on in the country with some of these mass shootings, it would be horrible for law enforcement not to pay attention to complaints.”

Whitehead said some of the posts in question were made on a closed Facebook page that Raub had just created and that had only three members, so he questioned whether anyone from the public would have complained about them.

“Support Brandon Raub” Facebook pages were drawing significant interest and — along with other Internet sites — had numerous comments from people outraged by the veteran’s detention.

Raub’s supporters are characterizing the detention as an arrest, complaining that he was handcuffed and whisked away in a police cruiser without being served a warrant or read his Miranda rights. But county and federal authorities say it was not an arrest because Raub doesn’t face criminal charges.

Col. Thierry Dupuis, the county police chief, said Raub was taken into custody upon the recommendation of mental health crisis intervention workers. He said the action was taken in accordance with the state’s emergency custody statute, which allows a magistrate to order the civil detention and psychiatric evaluation of a person deemed to be potentially dangerous. He said Raub was handcuffed because he resisted officers’ attempts to take him into custody.

Whitehead said Raub’s only act of resistance was refusing to allow authorities into his home without a warrant. A video of the incident shot by onlookers and posted on You Tube provides no insight because Raub was already in cuffs when the cameras started rolling.

[20120821-31](#)

23:30

SteveB

Re: Obama's Daughters are 'Senior Staffers' (reply to SteveM, FotM Newsletter #208)

Talk about wasteful trips! Your political party? See today’s lead story.

http://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/dana-milbank-are-republicans-getting-a-sign-from-above/2012/08/21/3424ba0a-ebd2-11e1-9ddc-340d5efb1e9c_story.html

The Politico report Sunday about drunken skinny-dipping in the Sea of Galilee gave House Republicans an unwanted image of debauchery — a faint echo of the Capitol page scandal that, breaking in September 2006, cemented Republicans’ fate in that November’s elections. The 30 Republican lawmakers on the “fact-finding” mission to Israel last summer earned a rebuke from Majority Leader Eric Cantor and attracted the attention of the FBI. The naked

congressman, Rep. Kevin Yoder (R-Kan.), admitted in a statement: “[R]egrettably I jumped into the water without a swimsuit.”

A boozy frolic at a Christian holy site might have been a considerable embarrassment for the party, but it was eclipsed by a bigger one: Akin’s preposterous claim on a St. Louis TV program that pregnancy is rare after a “legitimate rape” because “the female body has ways to try to shut that whole thing down.”

[20120821-34](#) 23:59 SteveB Photo: Baby Bolivian Anteater

<http://jessicainboliviasa.blogspot.com/>



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

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

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

Your email address will always be kept strictly confidential.

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

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

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FRIENDS OF THE MIDDLE NEWSLETTER #210 — AUG. 23, 2012

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

INDEX: Click here.

The Sacred Sperm Must Be Protected Too!

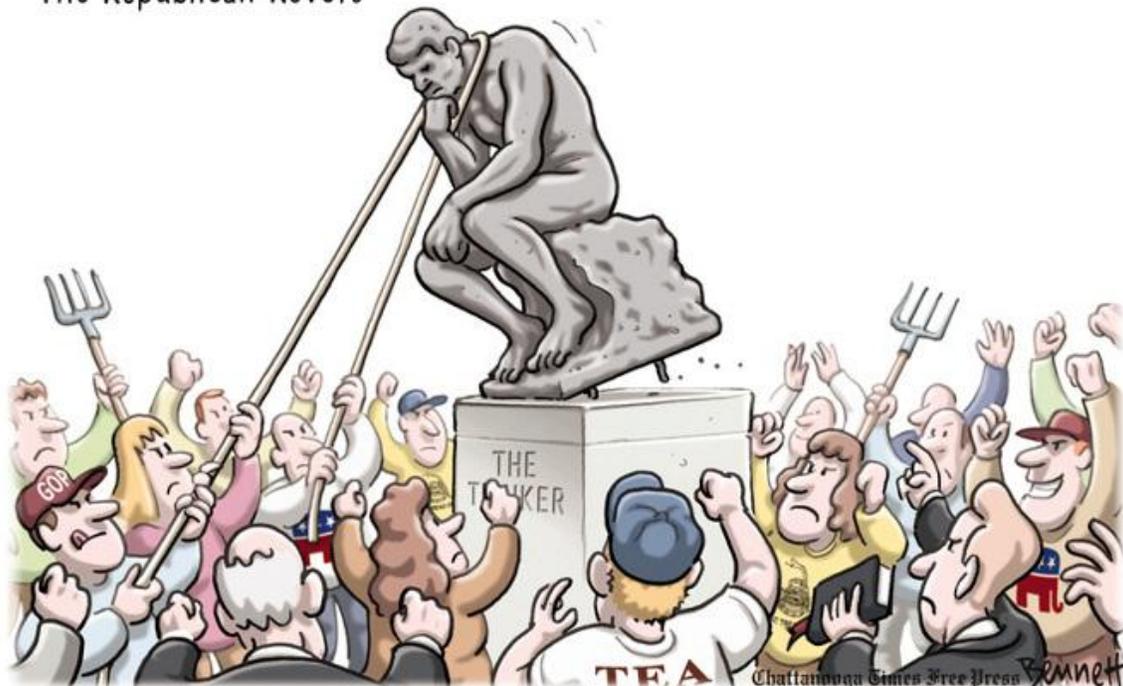
(posted by Steven W. Baker / SteveB, Aug. 23, 2012)

Shouldn't our "best and brightest" ideas be extended to their logical conclusions? Aren't men and women equal? What's that you say, Mitt? The equality of men and women didn't make it into the Constitution or the Book of Mormon? How convenient for Republicans hell-bent on returning us to Biblical times! "Now, please saddle-up my donkey and don't forget, the dog rides on top."

"Go for It, GOP — Sperm Rights!" by Martha Burk, Huffington Post

Aug. 22, 2012, (http://www.huffingtonpost.com/martha-burk/go-for-it-gop-sperm-right_b_1823325.html?utm_hp_ref=politics)

The Republican Revolt



I hope this blog reaches the GOP platform committee in time: you're being way-y-y too shy with your planks. A Human Life Amendment to the Constitution outlawing all abortions and granting embryos personhood through the 14th Amendment are good starts. Now, why not go all the way? Your party has already campaigned to eliminate contraception for women, but fertilized eggs shouldn't be the only ones to benefit from anti-contraception policies.

Simply put, sperm deserve equal personhood too (they're potential life), and men deserve the same life-affirming treatment vis-a-vis contraception that women are getting. The Bible says, "be fruitful and multiply; populate the earth abundantly" -- and the GOP can help.

The facts of men's fertility are that they can cause hundreds (even thousands in the case of certain athletes who brag about their abilities) more pregnancies than women can. In the most extreme case on both sides, consider a woman who becomes pregnant and gives birth every year of her fertile life. It is theoretically possible for her to have 35 children in her lifetime. In the same period, if a man had unprotected intercourse just once per week he could father 1,820 children. Add his increased years of fertility, and his potential for physical domination over women (aka "legitimate rape"), and we see that the problem of populating the earth is largely one of aiding male fertility -- meaning free the sperm from the contraceptives that kill them and the condoms that smother them.

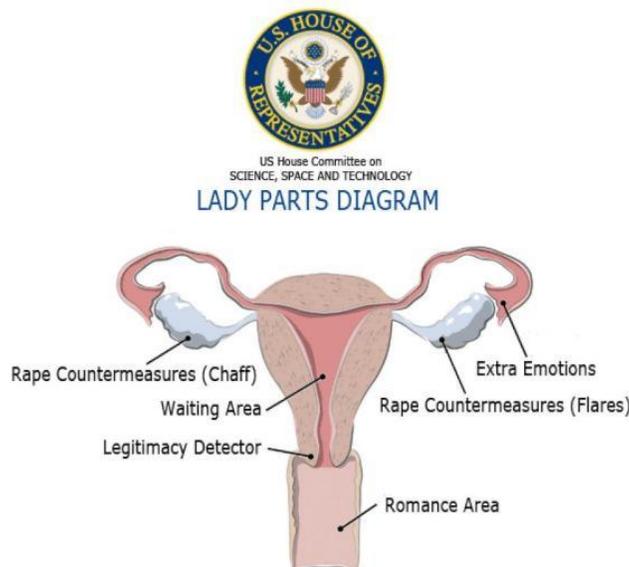
So how do we facilitate sperm rights? By outlawing condoms beginning at puberty, and requiring DNA samples to go into a national DNA registry at the same time. That way, each fertilized egg could exercise its constitutional right to know its paternity, and the full-term babies that result would be entitled to support until they reach 21, whether or not the father is married to the mother. Use of condoms for medical reasons unrelated to fertility would have to be approved by a panel of three doctors, and with the permission of his designated female partner. For men under 18, a judge's permission would be needed.

Control of men's fertility would not be hard to enforce. We could use a combination of punishments for those who obtained condoms illegally (and for pharmacies that sold them without proper authorization). The men could be required to adopt one orphan child per infraction and rear it to adulthood. The pharmacists could lose their licenses, or go to prison if they habitually aided men under the table by selling condoms or spermicides for their partners. With DNA fingerprinting the method is foolproof, especially if drug stores and convenience stores reported any man who tried to buy birth control unlawfully.

Protecting sperm rights would benefit society, and wouldn't really harm men.

Understand -- a man's right to control his own body and life choices would not be infringed. Men could still have sex. They would merely be asked to accept a few tiny, ever-so-reasonable restrictions.

C'mon GOP. You've got another few days to do the right thing -- now beef up that platform!



20120822-01	05:17	Tom	Video: "How One Texas County Fakes Crime Stats to Make Border Look Safe"
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Video: "How One Texas County Fakes Crime Stats to Make Border Look Safe" (Part 1), PJTV

Aug. 20, 2012, (<http://www.pjtv.com/?cmd=mpg&mpid=174&load=7331>)

20120822-02	10:45	SteveB	"Why Romney's Poll Numbers Are Falling Fast"
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Notice that this story is dated Aug. 11. Since then, there has been the Akin problem, etc., etc. I still haven't been able to hear anything concrete from R0mney about his much vaunted "economic message" above the din. And the tax problems and Bain problems are only going to get worse—much worse. I wonder if the guy is completely sure he really wants to be POTUS? Maybe for a guy of privilege, it just isn't worth it?

Maybe it will be just like when our worker Oscar gave up, walked off the job, and left his phone unanswered for days, once he discovered how truly hard it is to chisel a big arched doorway through a yard-thick solid brick wall. That must be how R0mney feels right now. And he could so easily be soaking in one of his hot tubs in one of his helicopters on one of his yachts in one of his swimming pools on one of his car elevators in one of his mansions or castles. (Think AND not OR!)

Ryan certainly hasn't produced much bounce in the polls. Who knows what R0mney's true feeling are on abortion, but he can take no stance other than what his base orders, which is anti-. I don't know why women would vote for the guy. How is it still so allegedly close? I have no blinking idea!

"Why Romney's Poll Numbers Are Falling Fast" by Henry Decker, *The National Memo*

Aug. 11, 2012, (<http://www.nationalmemo.com/why-romneys-poll-numbers-are-falling-fast/>)

Mitt Romney's presidential campaign is putting on a brave face in response to a series of polls that show President Obama expanding his lead over Romney, claiming that the new numbers don't really matter.

"There has not been any national news, anything that would push these numbers from 3 to 9 points," one anonymous Romney adviser told Politico. "You've got to have something to precipitate that kind of sea change."

Here at *The National Memo*, we can think of plenty of things that could have pushed Romney's numbers into a nosedive. Here are five of the many reasons that Romney may be fading in the polls:

The Romneyshambles

On the eve of the Olympics, Mitt Romney set out on an overseas trip in an effort to strengthen his foreign policy credentials. It did not go well.

Romney instantly offended Britain by questioning the country's preparation for the Olympics and doubting the Olympic spirit of the British people. For his troubles, he was skewered by the British press, personally rebuked by Prime Minister David Cameron, and booed by a crowd of 60,000 Londoners. Apparently Mitt's touted "Anglo-Saxon heritage" didn't do him much good, after all.

Praising Israel's Health Care

On the next leg of his trip, Romney praised Israel's health care system by noting that, while costs are "completely out of control" in the United States, Israel only spends "eight percent of [gross domestic product] on health care. And you're a pretty healthy nation."

Normally, pointing out these facts wouldn't be any sort of "gaffe" at all. Unfortunately for Romney, complimenting a country that has had universal health care since its founding in 1948 undercuts his own party's message of "Let him die!"

"Kiss My A*s!"

Somehow, Romney wasn't finished botching his foreign policy trip. At a stop near Poland's Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, members of the national press corps — toward whom Romney is both evasive and combative — began shouting questions at the Republican nominee, who had refused to engage them throughout the entire trip.

Romney's press secretary Rick Gorka responded to their questions in pretty much the least helpful manner possible, telling them to "Kiss my a*s" and "shove it."

It was a fitting end to a miserable trip for Team Romney.

Tax Plan Proven Mathematically Impossible

Romney has had trouble on the domestic front as well. Last week The Tax Policy Center released a study showing that, even if one assumes the most favorable conditions for Romney, it is literally impossible for his tax plan to achieve its stated goals.

Romney dismissed the report by accusing the non-partisan group that wrote the report of liberal bias. That bias is apparently a recent development; when the Romney campaign cited a report by the Tax Policy Center in November, it referred to the Center as an "objective third-party."

Where Are The Tax Returns?

Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid has taken it upon himself to make sure that Romney's refusal to release more than two years of tax returns stays in the news. Reid's claim that a Bain investor told him Romney did not pay any taxes for a decade outraged Romney and some figures in the media, but the public is on Reid's side: According to a recent CNN poll, 63 percent say that Romney should release more returns.

20120822-03	10:56	Pam	Re: "Why Romney's Poll Numbers Are Falling Fast" (reply to SteveB, above)
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It is beyond my comprehension how women, African-Americans, senior citizens, Latinos, college students, the unemployed and underemployed, the disabled, or the well-informed could consider voting for Romney, yet I know at least two smart people who plan to do just that. All I can conclude is that, in the end, we all vote with our gut, and some people are so irritated by liberals they think anything else is better. The big question is whether there is a majority of those folks or not. I wouldn't think so, which is why I find the closeness in the polls strange. I wonder if the media is keeping the race exciting artificially. Of course, Fox News has a lot to answer for, and I can imagine there being more fans of Ann Coulter than of Alan Grayson. There's a reason why aristocrats always feared the mob.

20120822-05	11:19	SteveB	Re: "Why Romney's Poll Numbers Are Falling Fast" (reply to Pam, above)
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Here's how OpEdNews puts it (<http://www.opednews.com/articles/Republicans-Gone-Wild-by-Andy-Ostroy-120822-27.html>):

And just what the hell is a "legitimate" rape? Maybe it's akin (pun intended) to "forcible" rape, another favorite Republican term. Apparently these imbeciles never looked at a dictionary, which defines rape as "forcing another person to have sexual intercourse."

While Preisse's and Yoder's offenses are despicable, it is Akin's utterly ignorant, misogynistic, insensitive, empathy-deficient remark that's beyond the pale. These radical ultra-conservatives like Akin have nothing but contempt for women. Their philosophies are Neanderthal and their behavior unconscionable.

And get this: Ryan has co-sponsored not one but two bills with Akin: The Sanctity of Life Act, informally known as the "Personhood" bill, and another which would allow for abortion exception in cases of "forcible rape" only. Is this the guy we want just a heartbeat away from the Oval Office? Someone who sanctions terms such as "legitimate rape" and "forcible rape?" Someone whose views on women's rights and issues mirrors that of a radical extremist like Akin? But the bazillion dollar question really is, What woman in her right mind would vote for Romney and Ryan?

20120822-06	11:47	Ben	Re: "Why Romney's Poll Numbers Are Falling Fast" (reply to SteveB, above)
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SteveB: What woman in her right mind would vote for Romney and Ryan?

Yes, that IS a question. The reality of its answer will surely surprise you.

Probably millions will.

20120822-04	11:06	Phil	Fw: Social Security / Government
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This is about as "middle" as it gets. It crosses the aisle. Both sides are complicit. These numbers might not be totally accurate, but the premise is. YOUR elected representatives don't care about doing what is morally, ethically or legally right. These programs, SS and Medicare, almost certainly affect most of us more directly than other issues.

I try to at least scan the news, stories, and views that you most graciously provide on a daily basis, SteveB. And I thank you for that and for all the input from your readers. Evaluating it from my perspective makes me believe that I am probably more closely aligned to the "middle" than most who respond. Frankly, I'm unconvinced that either side of the aisle cares to fix our problems.

The saddest thing is that the electorate continues to vote for these people. And now that Akin confirms he is remaining in the race, he is going to demonstrate my despair. He should not get more than a minute percentage of the vote, yet wait and see what he tallies in the fall. If he gets more than 10% of the vote, it will be a true travesty. Yet whoever is elected will, in my opinion, selfishly work to perpetuate their "service" in public office to the detriment of the people. Eventually, the citizenry is going to have to wake-up to the fact that it isn't the party that is denigrating the system, it's elected officials. BOTH PARTIES, people!

Thanks for allowing me to ramble.

[Source of original email unknown. -SteveB]

SOCIAL SECURITY NOW CALLED 'FEDERAL BENEFIT PAYMENT'/ENTITLEMENT!

Have you noticed, your Social Security check is now referred to as a "Federal Benefit Payment"?

I'll be part of the one percent to forward this. I am forwarding it because it touches a nerve in me, and I hope it will in you. Please keep passing it on until everyone in our country has read it.

The government is now referring to our Social Security checks as a "Federal Benefit Payment." This isn't a benefit – its earned income! Not only did we all contribute to Social Security but our employers did too.

It totaled 15% of our income before taxes. If you averaged \$30K per year over your working life, that's close to \$180,000 invested in Social Security.

If you calculate the future value of your monthly investment in social security (\$375/month, including both your and your employer's contributions) at a meager 1% interest rate compounded monthly, after 40 years of working you'd have more than \$1.3+ million dollars saved! This is your personal investment.

Upon retirement, if you took out only 3% per year, you'd receive \$39,318 per year, or \$3,277 per month.

That's almost three times more than today's average Social Security benefit of \$1,230 per month, according to the Social Security Administration (Google it - it's a fact).

And your retirement fund would last more than 33 years (until you're 98 if you retire at age 65)! I can only imagine how much better most average-income people could live in retirement if our government had just invested our money in low-risk interest-earning accounts.

Instead, the folks in Washington pulled off a bigger Ponzi scheme than Bernie Madoff ever did. They took our money and used it elsewhere. They "forgot" that it was OUR money they were taking. They didn't have a referendum to ask us if we wanted to lend the money to them.

And they didn't pay interest on the debt they assumed. And recently, they've told us that the money won't support us for very much longer. But is it our fault they misused our investments?

And now, to add insult to injury, they're calling it a "benefit," as if we never worked to earn every penny of it. Just because they "borrowed" the money, doesn't mean that our investments were a charity!

Let's take a stand. We have earned our right to Social Security and Medicare.

Demand that our legislators bring some sense into our government. Find a way to keep Social Security and Medicare going, for the sake of that 92% of our population who need it. Then call it what it is: Our Earned Retirement Income.

99% of people won't forward this. Will you?

20120822-07 14:13 SteveB Re: Social Security / Government (reply to Phil, above)

I think you raised some really important points here, Phil, especially in your introduction to the forwarded email.

I agree completely that both of our principal political parties have been corrupted by power and campaign contributions. It's a system our government created that it needs to change. Now, let me ask you one quick question: which of the two parties is most likely to listen to reason?

Though, as you point out, it is really the personnel we are dealing with here, not the abstract parties per se. Still...

All the more reason to vote them all out of office and start over (except, please, for Mr. Obama): "Take out the trash this November!"

Another thing I agree with is that the government has bungled Social Security (though, like you, I suspect the numbers presented in the email). **But Social Security needs to be fixed, not destroyed.** The same goes for Medicare, Medicaid, welfare, and education. Even Paul Ryan, in his budget, admitted that Obamacare saves money. Maybe stopping the damned wars would save more...

Lastly, I too don't like the way these programs have come to be known as "entitlements" and "benefits" rather than "insurance" or "retirement fund" or some name that might afford them more protection from the Republican axes than "entitlements" or "benefits".

[20120822-09](#) 15:25 Pam Re: Social Security / Government (reply to Phil, above)

I totally agree. Our politicians are out of control. I think there are a few good ones, but most want either to ram their agenda down our throats or stay in office so they can get rich. I'm disgusted by the whole mess. "Benefit" indeed. What a misuse of language! I think the Dems. are slightly less culpable (well, lots less) than the Reps., but the bozos we have in Congress now are a bunch of spineless, greedy wimps. Thanks for opening my "rant" valve.

[20120822-11](#) 17:47 SteveG Re: Social Security / Government (reply to Phil, above)

By having a two party system, the parties making the responsibility of each office holder/candidates to raise specified amounts of money, by having office holders tow the party line to get committee assignments, and by having Citizens United I would say that both parties and the office holders as well as current laws are the problems. Fixes are easy but will not be done in our or our children's life time – there is too much money involved.

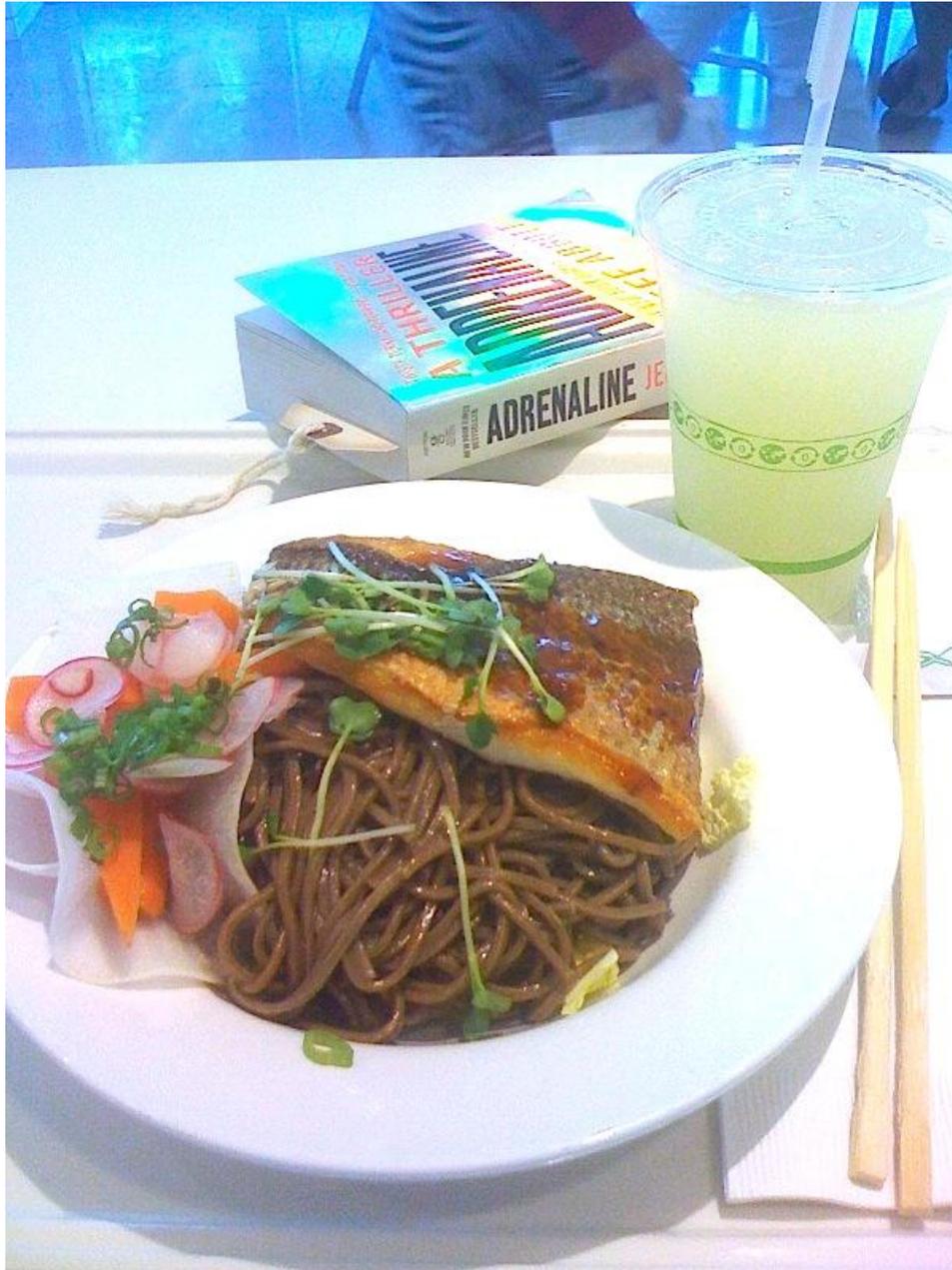
[20120822-13](#) 18:56 Art Re: Social Security / Government (reply to Phil, above)

I thought you might find the following article from snopes.com interesting:

<http://www.snopes.com/politics/taxes/benefit.asp>.

This has been around for awhile. The math is off by quite a bit. First it uses a high set of figures to assume how much you may have paid in, then it compares this to the average taken out. Read the last paragraph carefully.

Another fabulous fish feast for me today: although not a noodle guy at all, I found the whole-wheat soba noodles a better complement to the rest of the meal than I'd have imagined. My generous filet of real, actual, wild sea bass (NOT the farmed non-bass "toothfish" from Chile!) was (surprise!) seared "to a Queen's taste": crispy-skin, moist-flaky perfection, its delicate flavor and texture accented by a tasty soy-sesame sauce applied in appropriate moderation. The various radishes of the garnish, traditional reds, shaved daikon and daikon sprouts, were crisp and fresh: a subtle zest against the earthy blandness of the cold whole-wheat soba noodles. Lurking underneath was a generous foundation of very fresh, crisp Napa cabbage. A delicious and beautiful dish:



Real Sea Bass, Radish and Napa Salad over Soba Noodle

from MoveOn.org:

Representative Todd Akin's comment about "legitimate rape" was no gaffe. It was a glimpse into the GOP War on Women.

Republicans are just days away from ratifying a personhood amendment as part of their party platform, which would ban all abortions, with no exceptions for rape or incest.¹

32,000 rape survivors get pregnant in America each year.² And the Republican party would ban abortions for all of these women.

Today's *New York Times* editorial is challenging Mitt Romney and Paul Ryan to amend this "extremist," "mean-spirited and intolerant platform."³

MoveOn members need to join that call with hundreds of thousands of voices, because even if Romney and Ryan won't listen, America is listening. Representative Todd Akin's comments were a wake-up call about Republican views on women.

This shameful moment is our best opportunity to draw attention to the dangerous woman-hating agenda of the Republican Party and expose it to American voters.

But the GOP Convention is next week, and we want to confront Ryan and Romney with a massive petition at an event TOMORROW for the media to see, so we need to act urgently. **Can you sign today and ask everyone you know to sign, too?**

Romney and Ryan: "Remove the abortion ban for rape survivors from the Republican Party platform."

<http://pol.moveon.org/abortionban3/?rc=homepage>

Republicans, including Mitt Romney and Paul Ryan, are trying to run away from the terrible comments of their Senate candidate, Rep. Todd Akin, about "legitimate rape." But they can't.

Here's a brief history of Romney and Ryan's own words and deeds on this issue:

- Ryan and Akin were the original co-sponsors of a bill that would limit the definition of rape to "forcible rape" (Akin's idea of "legitimate rape").⁴
- Ryan co-sponsored a personhood bill with Akin, which would outlaw some forms of birth control and all abortions, with no exceptions for rape or incest.⁵
- Mitt Romney told Mike Huckabee that he would have "absolutely" supported a constitutional amendment establishing the definition of life at conception.⁶

Of course, now that the media is paying attention to their extreme views, the Romney-Ryan campaign stated that they would not prohibit abortion in cases of rape.⁷ But talk is cheap.

If Romney and Ryan want to prove that they don't stand with Akin on abortion bans for rape survivors, they need to get it out of the party platform. And our job is to make sure the country is watching what they do.

Sign today—Romney and Ryan: "Remove the abortion ban for rape survivors from the Republican Party platform."

Thanks for all you do, –Lenore, Elena, Amy, Marika, and the rest of the team

Sources:

¹"GOP party platform sticks with anti-abortion stance, does not address rape exception," *The Washington Post*, August 21, 2012, <http://www.moveon.org/r?r=279220&id=49504-20195165-I7waFhx&t=6>.

²"Injury Center: Violence Prevention," Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, <http://www.moveon.org/r?r=279195&id=49504-20195165-I7waFhx&t=7>.

³"What the G.O.P. Platform Represents," *The New York Times*, August 21, 2012, <http://www.moveon.org/r?r=279242&id=49504-20195165-I7waFhx&t=8>.

⁴"How Todd Akin and Paul Ryan Partnered to Redefine Rape," Think Progress, August 19, 2012, <http://www.moveon.org/r?r=279196&id=49504-20195165-I7waFhx&t=9>.

⁵"Paul Ryan Sponsored Fetal Personhood Bill, Opposes Family Planning Funds," Huffington Post, August 11, 2012, <http://www.moveon.org/r?r=278852&id=49504-20195165-I7waFhx&t=10>.

⁶"Romney: I Would 'Absolutely' Support State Constitutional Amendment to Define Life As Beginning At Conception," Think Progress, October 3, 2011, <http://www.moveon.org/r?r=279210&id=49504-20195165-I7waFhx&t=11>.

⁷"Romney Statement on Abortion Contradicts Ryan's Earlier Stance," *The New York Times*, August 20, 2012, <http://www.moveon.org/r?r=279214&id=49504-20195165-I7waFhx&t=12>.

20120822-12	18:11	SteveB	Invalsa Coffee from Bolivia
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I don't know about you, but I love a good cup of coffee! It seems like my Mom always had a pot on, to have a cup or two with anybody who showed-up.

Another thing I love is trying to use (whenever possible) and promote local products. For instance, we use only Bolivian ingredients in our cookies, and the packaging is Bolivian. Our equipment is Brazilian, whenever possible. And all our ingredients come from our own Department (state) of Santa Cruz, except our chocolate comes from the neighboring Amazonian Department of Beni. The coffee we serve comes exclusively from the Yungas.

I want to let all of you know, especially those of you who will go out of their way for a good cup of joe, that the Bolivian coffees are wonderful and still incredibly reasonably priced in the States.

When we lived in Montana, we bought green Bolivian coffee beans in reasonable quantities from this American importer and purveyor of Bolivian coffees:

<http://www.invalsa.com/>.

They are great people! True Bolivians! Their website is very interesting and instructional.

Here's the skinny on coffee, in case you didn't know. Green, unroasted coffee beans can easily stay fresh for more than a year. Once coffee is roasted, without extreme packaging measures, it stays fresh for a week at the most. Once it is ground, you have maybe a day, though I prefer to say one minute.

For the very best coffee, you need a small roaster and a grinder. Invalsa, Amazon, and many online retailers sell good roasters for less than \$200. You can pay for these things with the money you will save by buying unroasted beans. You can roast beans the night before, but **you must make coffee immediately after grinding**. For best results, use boiling water poured through a "natural" paper filter, not the bleached white kind.

If you don't want to go to all that trouble, maybe your local Starbucks or other coffee place has roasted Bolivian coffee you could try. It's always certified organic and fair labor. The problem with buying roasted coffees from these

places is that they also house all kinds of yukky flavored coffee beans which pollute the delicate flavor of all the unflavored beans in the house. Boo!

20120822-14 22:58 SteveM You Always Have Something to Say...

About the dumb a*s thing Repub's might do or say, but I never hear criticize or mock the dumb a*s thing that Biden, Pelosi, Harry or Odummy say or do.

And you claim to be Friends of the Middle? I guess you took that name because the *Daily Worker* was spoken for?

[Source of original email unknown. –SteveB]

1. If any other of our presidents had criticized a state law that he admitted he never even read, would you think that he is just an ignorant hothead?
2. If any other of our presidents joined the country of Mexico and sued a state in the United States to force that state to continue to allow illegal immigration, would you question his patriotism and wonder whose side he was on?
3. If any other of our presidents had pronounced the Marine Corps like Marine Corpse, would you think him an idiot?
4. If any other of our presidents had put 87,000 workers out of work by arbitrarily placing a moratorium on offshore oil drilling on companies that have one of the best safety records of any industry because one foreign company had an accident, would you have agreed?
5. If any other of our presidents had used a forged document as the basis of the moratorium that would render 87000 American workers unemployed would you support him?
6. If any other of our presidents had been the first President to need a Teleprompter installed to be able to get through a press conference, would you have laughed and said this is more proof of how inept he is on his own and is really controlled by smarter men behind the scenes?
7. If any other of our presidents had spent hundreds of thousands of dollars to take his First Lady to a play in NYC, would you have approved?
8. If any other of our presidents had reduced your retirement plan holdings of GM stock by 90% and given the unions a majority stake in GM, would you have approved?
9. If any other of our presidents had made a joke at the expense of the Special Olympics, would you have approved?
10. If any other of our presidents had given Gordon Brown a set of inexpensive and incorrectly formatted DVDs, when Gordon Brown had given him a thoughtful and historically significant gift, would you have approved?
11. If any other of our presidents had given the Queen of England an iPod containing videos of his speeches, would you have thought it a proud moment for America?
12. If any other of our presidents had bowed to the King of Saudi Arabia would you have approved?
13. If any other of our presidents had visited Austria and made reference to the nonexistent "Austrian language," would you have brushed it off as a minor slip?
14. If any other of our presidents had filled his cabinet and circle of advisers with people who cannot seem to keep current in their income taxes, would you have approved?

15. If any other of our presidents had stated that there were 57 states in the United States, wouldn't you have had second thoughts about his capabilities?

16. If any other of our presidents would have flown all the way to Denmark to make a five minute speech about how the Olympics would benefit him walking out his front door in his home town, would you not have thought he was a self-important, conceited, egotistical jerk.

17. If any other of our presidents had been so Spanish illiterate as to refer to "Cinco de Cuatro" in front of the Mexican ambassador when it was the 5th of May (Cinco de Mayo), and continued to flub it when he tried again, wouldn't you have winced in embarrassment?

18. If any other of our presidents had burned 9,000 gallons of jet fuel to go plant a single tree on Earth Day, would you have concluded he's a hypocrite?

19. If any other of our presidents' administrations had okayed Air Force One flying low over millions of people followed by a jet fighter in downtown Manhattan causing widespread panic, would you have wondered whether they actually get what happened on 9-11?

20. If any other of our presidents had failed to send relief aid to flood victims throughout the Midwest with more people killed or made homeless than in New Orleans, would you want it made into a major ongoing political issue with claims of racism and incompetence?

21. If any other of our presidents had created the position of 32 Czars who report directly to him, bypassing the House and Senate on much of what is happening in America, would you have ever approved?

22. If any other of our presidents had ordered the firing of the CEO of a major corporation, even though he had no constitutional authority to do so, would you have approved?

So, tell me again, what is it about Obama that makes him so brilliant and impressive?

Can't think of anything? Don't worry. He's done all this in 34 months, so you don't have that much time to come up with an answer.

Every statement and action in this email is factual and directly attributable to Barrack Hussein Obama. Every bumble is a matter of record and completely verifiable.

AND NOW--HE ACTUALLY WANTS US TO RE-ELECT HIM.

[Well, I'd have to ask...is this the best they can come up with? I would answer all of these questions, I am sure, in the way least expected by their author. By the way, we call ourselves "Friends of the Middle" because we are polite and respectful to each other and everything we get from you and the other Republicans is so radically Right that it's amazing. Case in point: the above email and all the racist lies it contains, and how irrelevant if there is a tiny glimmer of truth? But thank you for submitting it...always instructional. And, yes, I always seem to have something to say! For instance, here's a question back at you: Are the following terms indicative of the Middle or the far Right: "forcible rape", "legitimate rape", "no abortion for incest pregnancy for you, b*tch"? Do you really think your Party can even see the Middle from where they stand? Do you ever answer questions or just pose them?--SteveB]

20120822-15	23:02	SteveM	"Obama: Like a Banana-Republic Despot"
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You can't disagree with the article below, because it was written by a black man and it would be racist to do so. That is, if you hold yourself to the same standards you held everyone else to, 4 years ago.

[Qué? It's racist not to believe everything any black man writes? Does that include Allen West? Barack Obama? Then you are surely a racist, my friend. –SteveB]

"Obama: Like a Banana-Republic Despot" by Thomas Sowell, WND

Aug. 21, 2012, (<http://www.wnd.com/2012/08/obama-like-a-banana-republic-despot/>)

There are some very serious issues at stake in this year's election – so many that some people may not be able to see the forest for the trees. Individual issues are the trees, but the forest is the future of America as we have known it.

The America that has flourished for more than two centuries is being quietly but steadily dismantled by the Obama administration, during the process of dealing with particular issues.

[POPPYCOCK! FANTASY! DELUSION! LIES! Let me ask you this. If the above is true, why are Republicans letting him get away with it? Shouldn't they be condemned even more vociferously because they should know better? LOL! –SteveB]

For example, the merits or demerits of President Obama's recent executive order suspending legal liability for young people who are here illegally, presumably as a result of being brought here as children by their parents, can be debated pro and con. But such a debate overlooks the much more fundamental undermining of the whole American system of constitutional government.

The separation of powers into legislative, executive and judicial branches of government is at the heart of the Constitution of the United States – and the Constitution is at the heart of freedom for Americans.

No president of the United States is authorized to repeal parts of legislation passed by Congress. He may veto the whole legislation, but then Congress can override his veto if they have enough votes. Nevertheless, every president takes an oath to faithfully execute the laws that have been passed and sustained – not just the ones he happens to agree with.

If laws passed by the elected representatives of the people can be simply overruled unilaterally by whoever is in the White House, then we are no longer a free people, choosing what laws we want to live under.

When a president can ignore the plain language of duly passed laws and substitute his own executive orders, then we no longer have "a government of laws, and not of men" but a president ruling by decree, like the dictator in some banana republic.

When we confine our debates to the merits or demerits of particular executive orders, we are tacitly accepting arbitrary rule. The Constitution of the United States cannot protect us unless we protect the Constitution. But, if we allow ourselves to get bogged down in the details of particular policies imposed by executive orders, and vote solely on that basis, then we have failed to protect the Constitution – and ourselves.

Whatever the merits or demerits of the No Child Left Behind Act, it is the law until Congress either repeals it or amends it. But for Barack Obama to unilaterally waive whatever provisions he doesn't like in that law undermines the fundamental nature of American government.

President Obama has likewise unilaterally repealed the legal requirement that welfare recipients must work, by simply redefining "work" to include other things like going to classes on weight control. If we think the bipartisan welfare reform legislation from the Clinton administration should be repealed or amended, that is something for the legislative branch of government to consider.

There have been many wise warnings that freedom is seldom lost all at once. It is usually eroded away, bit by bit, until it is all gone. You may not notice a gradual erosion while it is going on, but you may eventually be shocked to

discover one day that it is all gone, that we have been reduced from citizens to subjects, and the Constitution has become just a meaningless bunch of paper.

Obamacare imposes huge costs on some institutions, while the president's arbitrary waivers exempt other institutions from having to pay those same costs. That is hardly the "equal protection of the laws," promised by the 14th Amendment.

John Stuart Mill explained the dangers in that kind of government long ago: "A government with all this mass of favours to give or to withhold, however free in name, wields a power of bribery scarcely surpassed by an avowed autocracy, rendering it master of the elections in almost any circumstances but those of rare and extraordinary public excitement."

If Obama gets re-elected, he knows that he need no longer worry about what the voters think about anything he does. Never having to face them again, he can take his arbitrary rule by decree as far as he wants. He may be challenged in the courts but, if he gets just one more Supreme Court appointment, he can pick someone who will rubber stamp anything he does and give him a 5-to-4 majority.

20120822-16 23:04 SteveM Fw: Sign of the Times

This is a custom made sign hanging on the fence of Blue Stream – Oil and Gas Rental and Supply Company, Highway 90, New Iberia, La. The "We" in the sign refers to the Owners, Hard Working and Dedicated Employees, The Suppliers and, most important, the Clients and Customers. I understand that many other successful companies are in the process of having similar signs made.



20120822-18 23:38 SteveB Re: Sign of the Times (reply to SteveM, above)

Don't you get it? This company didn't do one single thing without government help! Who built the Interstates they ship over, for instance? Who provided education, etc., etc.? That's the way America works (or any other country for that matter). This company probably started with a government guaranteed Small Business Administration loan.

This is so elementary as to be ludicrous. America decided these issues long ago, now the ignorant and power-hungry want us all to forget and return to the 19th Century. No!

Just because some rich, selfish Republican a*s-hole says something does not make it true.

Have a nice day.

20120822-17	23:08	SteveM	"Why Is Michelle Obama so Tired?"
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You can't disagree with the article below, because it was written by a black man and it would be racist to do so. That is, if you hold yourself to the same standards you held everyone else to, 4 years ago.

"Why Is Michelle Obama so Tired?" by Mychal Massie, WND

Feb. 27, 2012, (<http://www.wnd.com/2012/02/why-is-michelle-obama-so-tired/>)

(Exclusive: Mychal Massie says first lady 'doesn't give a rat's tail' about her behavior.)

What on earth can Michelle Obama possibly be tired from? What has she done since her husband was elected that gives her one reason to be tired? I know that flying, for the proletariat such as myself, can be tiring and, more times than not, a genuine pain – but she flies in presidential luxury, sans the president. And the only checkin' in and full-body scan she goes through at an airport is when she looks at herself in a mirror.

We, the taxpayers of this great nation, demand to know just what it is that has her royalness so worn out and tired, that after just enjoying a lavish 17-day Hawaiian Christmas vacation (that cost taxpayers \$4 million), she needs another vacation at one of the most exclusive (and anti-union) resorts in the country.

It cannot be that she is overworked because, if the liberal *Los Angeles Times* is to be believed, between them, the Obamas have 454 White House aides, at a cost to the taxpayers of more than \$37 million annually – and that doesn't include recent pay raises. (See: "No Recession For Obama's 454 White House aides: They'll make \$37,121,463 this year"; Andrew Malcolm, July 5, 2011.) And before you ask – yes, that is more than President and Mrs. Bush had, and I was one of the lone voices decrying the size and cost of Laura Bush's staff.

Could Ms. Obama still be suffering fatigue from the weight of having kept secret, for two years, her extravagant Halloween costume ball? Even though they used military families as a cover in case it got out, the last thing she wanted the public to know was that, while Americans were suffering in the depths of recession, she had the biggest players in Hollywood doing an exclusive costume party just for herself and her family.

Or perhaps it's the lingering effects of taking her mother and daughters to South Africa and Botswana, or the sheer exhaustion of rushing out of Washington, four hours ahead of her husband, so she wouldn't have to share her presidential jet with him on the way to Martha's Vineyard for their annual beach break.

Then again, maybe she was exhausted from her personal \$50,000 underwear shopping spree with the queen of Qatar, at Agent Provocateur, the store that bills itself as selling "the most erotic lingerie in the world." Realizing that you're responsible for closing down Madison Avenue can be tiring, and watching staff carry all those bags back to her limousines ... whew! – that would sure wear me out. And after the tiring experience of picking out all of those exotic undies, what better place to recover than an uber-posh Vail resort and the private home owned by Paula and Jim Crown?

Or maybe she's worn out from rolling around on the floor to the delight of Ellen Degeneres, or making muscles on a daytime show, or pulling on a rope on another show, or eating at all of the restaurants where she loves to pig it up.

Then again, maybe Ms. Obama is just an arrogant, high-minded person who doesn't give a rat's tail about propriety or how her behavior looks to a suffering public because, after all, her husband claims the economy is improving, and who are we going to believe – the reality of our financial situation or her husband?

Michelle Obama can afford to live life large since every dime she's spending comes on the backs and sweat of others. Nothing, zip, nada that she spends did she personally earn. And therein is the disgusting elitism of a woman who forgets where she came from, and dares you to remind her.

We are responsible for the billionaire life she lives, and it's time we started demanding that she be accountable to us. It's time we started confronting Obama at every press conference and/or speaking venue about the behavior of his wife. He is spending hundreds of millions of our money, flying around the country to raise a billion dollars for his campaign war chest, and we're paying \$4 per gallon for fuel. We've lost our homes, our mortgages are upside-down, our property taxes aren't enough to cover the increasing cost of infrastructure because of the drain of resources by illegal aliens, and all of this is happening as the price of putting milk and cereal on our tables is rising dramatically.

But why shouldn't she be smiling? For the first time in her adult life, she is proud of America – and why not? She has tens of millions of peons paying for her very own private reparations – now that's enough to put a smile on any elitist's face.

20120822-19

23:58

SteveG

Quotes: The Candidates on Paying for Higher Education

THE CHOICE

Paying for higher education



6.27.2012

Students should “get as much education as they can afford.”

6.21.2012

“Higher education cannot be a luxury reserved for the privileged few. It is an economic necessity.”

BARACKOBAMA.COM/TRUTHTEAM

<http://dailycoffeenews.com/2012/02/29/bolivian-farmers-switching-from-coca-to-coffee/>



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

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

Your email address will always be kept strictly confidential.

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

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

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FRIENDS OF THE MIDDLE NEWSLETTER #211 — AUG. 24, 2012

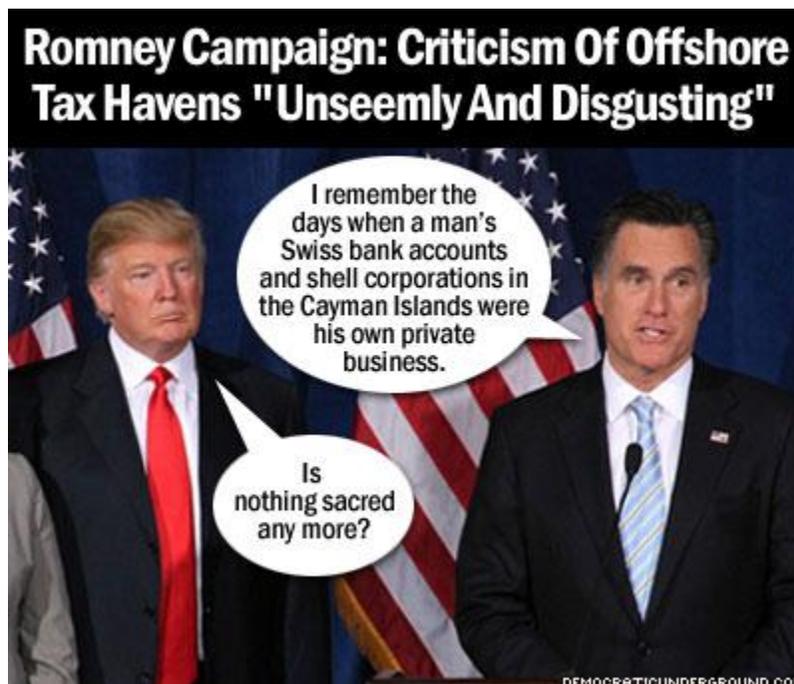
Welcome to always lively political discussion and whatever else comes up.
<http://www.FriendsOfTheMiddle.org> FriendsOfTheMiddle@hotmail.com

INDEX: Click here.

Bain in the A*s!

(posted by Steven W. Baker / SteveB, Aug. 24, 2012)

(Thanks to Huffington Post for the great headline!)



"Romney Tax Return Provides a Window to His Soul" by Walter Brasch, OpEdNews

Aug. 23, 2012, (<http://www.opednews.com/articles/Romney-Tax-Return-Provides-by-Walter-Brasch-120823-225.html>)

When a craven of buffoons and bigots disguised in the bodies of Birthers figured that anyone with dark skin and a foreign name had to be born outside the U.S., Barack Obama provided a birth certificate. Not just the usual "short form," but a state-certified copy of the "long form" that detailed he was born in Hawaii, which some birthers apparently think is a foreign territory, to a mother who was a natural-born U.S. citizen.

That, of course, was not enough for the whackadoodles who claimed, among other things, that the President's birth certificate was altered or forged. All of their claims have been debunked by scientific evidence. Of course, they produced their own poorly-forged birth certificate that they said "proved" President Obama was born in Kenya.

In February, billionaire Donald (Look-at-How-Wonderful I-Am) Trump, an unabashed Birther, stood next to multi-millionaire Mitt Romney in a Las Vegas casino and endorsed him for the Republican nomination. A few months earlier, Trump had gotten significant face-time in the media while flirting with the idea of running for the presidency while whining about Romney. "He'd buy companies. He'd close companies. He'd get rid of jobs," Trump crowed. But now, with Romney running well ahead in the primary contests, Trump was trying to be relevant and stay in the political spotlight. Romney, for his part, smiled and said nothing to suggest that Trump could be wrong about pursuing the birther argument. Trying to have everyone like him, one of the most unlikable presidential candidates refused to repudiate Trump's birther views.

Unlike Barack Obama, Mitt Romney does have a secret. This one is buried within what he either did or did not report to the IRS.

It's traditional, but not required, that presidential nominees release copies of their tax returns. Most people have no idea how to read a tax return, especially one with dozens of amendments, filings, and schedules. But, the posting of the returns is a form of trust.

Barack Obama has released his returns. Romney's father, George, former governor of Michigan and presidential candidate in 1968, released 12 years, thus setting a standard for future presidential candidates.

At first the flip-flopping Romney said he didn't plan to release the returns. Then he said, "Maybe." Then he declared he'd release only the previous two years' returns. Then he said that because of the complexity of the return, he filed for an extension from the IRS so he could file after the April 15 deadline for the 2011 return. Then this past week before a fundraiser he said he "never paid less than 13 percent... So I paid taxes every single year." He expected us just to believe him. He never defined whether that was just income taxes, or included all taxes paid, including social security, local, and state taxes, thus making the federal income tax even lower.

Let's pretend he meant income taxes. Even at 13 percent, it's one of the lowest tax rates. In 2011, Romney had a gross income of about \$21 million, according to a partial return Romney finally allowed to be posted. The effective tax rate for persons with incomes over \$1 million, according to the Tax Foundation, averages about 25 percent.

But, most of Ann and Mitt Romney's reported income in 2011 was based on capital gains. In 2003, the Bush--Cheney administration had lowered capital gains taxes to only 15 percent, primarily benefitting the wealthy. If the Romneys did not take most of their money from investment capital, their tax bracket would be 35 percent.

There are a number of questions that need to be answered.

The first questions are about that extension for the 2011 taxes. With a fleet of lawyers and accountants, why did the Romneys need at least a five month extension to file a return? Was it to massage the data for public consumption? Equally important, if he needed this extension to file a personal income tax return, what does that say about his ability to govern a nation with a \$2.3 trillion budget?

Members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints tithe to the church. The Romneys acknowledge donating \$2.5 million in cash to the church in 2011. Were they overly generous? Or, does that contribution reflect that the Romneys' income may have been about \$25 million. If that is the case, where did the rest go? Ann Romney told NBC News, "We also give 10% of our income to charity." According to a partial return in 2011, the Romneys claim they donated about \$4 million to charity. If Ann Romney is accurate, that would be a \$40 million income, twice what is claimed.

Why Romney won't release tax returns prior to 2010 may be because secrets are buried in 2009. According to BuzzFlash's Mark Karlin, citing Lawrence O'Donnell's pointed queries, "Romney may have taken advantage of a 2009 IRS amnesty period to disclose hidden income in offshore accounts but subject to US taxation. The amnesty offer

allowed such persons to escape potential criminal prosecution for tax evasion." It would be nice to know how much income was diverted to off-shore accounts in Bermuda, the Cayman Islands, and Switzerland, and into various tax-shelters the average American has no idea even exist.

That leads to an obvious question. How much of the Romneys' income over the past decade, not just the two years when he was planning to run for president, had deductions that might be questionable to the average person who doesn't have lawyers and accountants on retainer? Certainly, taking a \$77,000 write-off in 2010 for a show horse isn't something the average American can do. Working with an onerous tax code, loaded with myriad special interest loopholes, the Romneys know how to take everything wealthy Americans are entitled to receive. It may be legal, but is it ethical?

Frankly, it doesn't make much difference how much Romney earned, how he earned it, what he did with it, or how he and some extremely bright tax advisors took advantage of the system created by lobbyists and Congress. What does matter is that by stonewalling, obfuscating, and refusing to give full disclosure, he appears to have something to hide. And upon that--and that alone--the people and the media need to pursue why Romney is reluctant to release financial data. It's a matter not of how rich he is, but a matter of trust and a window into his soul.

"Romney's Albatross" by Michael Collins, OpEdNews

Aug. 23, 2012, (<http://www.opednews.com/articles/Romney-s-Albatross-by-Michael-Collins-120823-242.html>)

The public is just beginning to pay attention to the key issues of the 2012 presidential campaign. Even at this early stage, there is a clear trend in opinion against vice presidential candidate Paul Ryan's Medicare voucher program. On this and other key issues, Ryan's very explicit positions and legislative proposals spell doom for the Romney campaign. Ryan's record and a Republican platform endorsing those extreme views are Romney's albatross.

A Pew Research poll, August 23, exposes the impact of one key campaign. *Medicare Voucher Plan Remains Unpopular* (<http://pewresearch.org/pubs/2331/medicare-voucher-paul-ryan-joseph-biden-vice-president-social-security-deficit-entitlements>) captures the impact of timing for Ryan's exposure as a hard core, right wing extremist.

PEW RESEARCH CENTER 8/16-19		
Medicare Vouchers (e.g. Ryan's proposal)		
Have you heard of this program		
	JUNE '11	AUG '12
Heard a lot	20%	30%
Heard a little	50%	42%
Heard nothing	29%	29%
Among those who have heard...		
Favor	35%	34%
Oppose	45%	49%
Don't know	20%	17%

Basically, Ryan destroys Medicare by turning it into a voucher system. Seniors would receive a grant from the Federal government to purchase their own coverage (on those useless exchanges Obama created, perhaps). The additional costs represent 35% of median senior income in 2022 and go up from there to 50% of median income by 2050. A Republican death panel, this approach will deny a major portion of seniors of part of all of their medical services.

The Pew poll referenced in the graph was conducted just days after Romney's August 11 announcement of his vice presidential choice. It is a good starting point for the impact of increasing awareness by the public and the direction that may take.

The awareness numbers on vouchers (see graph above), have you heard, show a 50% increase in members of the public who have heard a lot about the program, 20% to 30%. Collapse the heard a lot and heard a little into a general awareness number. That figure is up by only two points from 70% in June 2011 to 72% today.

Among the 30% who "have heard" about the plan, there is a strong shift against vouchers. Today, 49% oppose vouchers compared to 45% in June 2011. That four point increase in opposition came with a two point increase in general awareness. As the campaign continues, using that two to four point awareness-opposition ratio, public disapproval of Ryan's voucher program would be above 60%.

Ryan said he's not Romney when asked about his position opposing abortion even in cases of rape. Romney's the boss. But Romney picked Ryan knowing full well his radical record. Candidate John McCain found out just how influential a vice presidential pick can be.

How many times will Ryan need to repudiate his record and defer to the boss? How will that make Ryan look?

There is plenty of time to draw more attention is drawn to Ryan's extremist agenda. Bringing his position into focus on Medicare, abortion, and tax breaks for the very rich will keep Romney on the defensive and drain his campaign resources.

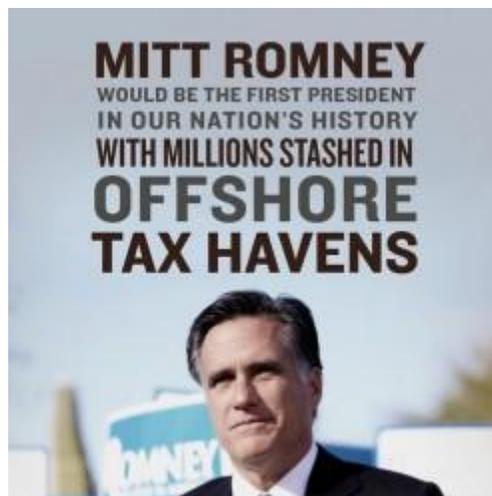
The real shame is that Ryan's radical agenda and the general inanity of presidential campaigns leaves the major issues of our time out of the dialog.

What will happen with the increasing pace of climate change and how can we mitigate the impact?

Why is President Obama carrying out the Bush doctrine of bullying and attacking countries that fail to cooperate with administration policies?

How do we get rid of the crony capitalism that has ruined the economy and cased so much suffering here and around the world?

(This article may be reproduced with attribution of authorship and a link to this article.)



20120823-07 13:54 SteveB "Bain Documents Released by Gawker"

I told you he was a blatant liar!

"Bain Documents Released by Gawker" by Huffington Post

Aug. 23, 2012, (http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/08/23/bain-documents-released- n_1825231.html)

The website Gawker published online hundreds of pages of documents from Mitt Romney's tenure at Bain Capital on Thursday.

Romney's work at the firm, as well as statements he's made on the issue, have come under scrutiny over the course of the presidential campaign.

John Cook at Gawker reports on one of the revelations from the files released:

Romney has long claimed, despite evidence to the contrary, that he retired from Bain Capital in 1999. The Bain documents we obtained indicate that his involvement with the company extended years past that date.

Romney indicated in a financial disclosure form that he "retired" from Bain on Feb. 11, 1999. Gawker reports, however, that the presidential candidate had a stake in Sankaty Credit Opportunities, which was not created until 2002.

Click here to read the Bain documents: <http://gawker.com/5933641>.

20120823-10 15:50 SteveG "The Bain Files: Inside Mitt Romney's Tax-Dodging Cayman Schemes"

Facts or fiction?

<http://gawker.com/>

20120823-11 15:53 SteveG Re: "The Bain Files..." (to SteveB)

Guess I was a little late getting to Gawker.

20120823-15 16:08 SteveB Re: "The Bain Files..." (reply to SteveG, above)

Not by very darned much, if any! Jeez, I hope some of this stuff sticks. How can the guy sleep at night?

20120823-16 16:17 SteveG Re: "The Bain Files..." (reply to SteveB, above)

Have you read the article in *Newsweek* with Obama on the cover saying that Obama has to go?

20120823-18 16:38 SteveB Re: "The Bain Files..." (reply to SteveG, above)

Niall Ferguson. An old enemy. Much rebuttal out there already, thank goodness, but this turns out to be the heart of the Republican campaign. Nothing about R0mney-Ryan, only that the President didn't fulfill his promises, though half the government and many billionaires have been out to bring him down since the day he was elected, and America and its workers and citizens be damned!

They would destroy America to gain control of it. That much has been proven.

Is this how stupid Americans have become that they buy this cr*p?

20120823-01 10:13 MarthaH "Romney Campaign Rolls Out Energy Policy"

Here we go again:

"Romney Campaign Rolls Out Energy Policy" by Garrett Haake, NBC

Aug. 23, 2012, (<http://firstread.nbcnews.com/news/2012/08/23/13423039-romney-campaign-rolls-out-energy-policy?lite>)

(LITTLE ROCK, Ark.) With just one week until Mitt Romney takes the stage at the GOP convention in Tampa, his campaign rolled out the candidate's energy policy -- one that they hope illustrates stark differences with President Obama, and which excites middle class voters looking for an economic boost.

The Romney policy, spelled out in a white paper and on a conference call with reporters on Wednesday, focuses on developing domestic fossil fuels like oil, gas and coal - in large part by shifting federal responsibilities to the states, and by expanding exploration and production nationwide. Romney will outline the policy in oil-rich New Mexico on Thursday.

Romney's plan would make states the custodian of energy production on federal lands within their borders and allow them to implement their own federally-approved leasing practices. Such a move would effectively shift responsibility for permitting, leasing and environmental regulation to states, with the hope of speeding energy development by cutting red tape.

Romney's plan calls for reaching North American energy independence by 2020, primarily through expansion of traditional fossil fuels. The United States is currently the world's third largest oil producer, which Romney would hope to expand. The U.S. also currently imports more than half its oil from countries in the Western Hemisphere, with Canada making up a 29-percent share. Those imports could be increased through greater cooperation and by the immediate approval of the Keystone XL Pipeline, and similar projects.

"The challenge in getting there is not about the resources we have, it's not about the technology we have, it's about the government that we have," said Oren Cass, Romney's domestic policy director. "And the real question is: are we going to pursue the political reforms that will allow us to develop the resources to their fullest?"

Those reforms will also include greenlighting increased offshore drilling, slowed after 2009's BP oil spill disaster, particularly off the coasts of Virginia and North Carolina where Romney's advisers argue there is already widespread support for increased offshore drilling.

"One of the things that's detailed here in the policy under the offshore section is to establish the most aggressive leasing plan ever put forward, as compared to President Obama's, which was the least aggressive ever put forward," Cass told reporters.

The GOP challenger's plan pays little attention to renewable fuels like wind and solar power, long championed by Democrats, including Obama, who has touted green jobs creation as a major part of his own economic and energy plans.

Romney's plan, in contrast, includes continued research support for alternative fuels, but would have wind and solar generation succeed or fail on their own, without government subsidies or loan guarantees, a politically unpopular position in some wind and solar producing states like Iowa and Colorado, but one Romney's advisers said they believed could be overcome by the overall economic benefits of their plan.

President Obama makes a similar argument about continued oil industry tax subsidies, arguing that the highly profitable major oil companies don't need the tax breaks, the extension of which is supported by Romney.

Romney is expected to further outline his energy plan in remarks later today in New Mexico, the sixth largest oil producing state in the country, pumping roughly 3-percent of the nation's oil on an annual basis, according to the Energy Information Administration.

20120823-02 11:39 SteveM Re: Sign of the Times (reply to SteveB, FotM Newsletter #210)



What Obama is saying is you don't own your business, dummy, because he's a f*cking socialist. Businesses et al PAID FOR IT! Wise up, dummy

The Dwight D. Eisenhower National System of Interstate and Defense Highways, AKA the Interstate, was **built with taxes** collected by Federal, state and local government from companies and highway users in business long **before the roads were completed.**

from Wikipedia (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Interstate_Highway_System):

Initial federal planning for a nationwide highway system began in 1921 when the Bureau of Public Roads asked the Army to provide a list of roads it considered necessary for national defense.

In 1938, President Franklin D. Roosevelt gave Thomas MacDonald, chief at the Bureau of Public Roads, a hand-drawn map of the U.S. marked with eight superhighway corridors for study. In 1939, Bureau of Public Roads Division of Information chief Herbert S. Fairbank wrote a report entitled Toll Roads and Free Roads, "the first formal description of what became the interstate highway system," and in 1944 the similarly themed Interregional Highways.

Eisenhower gained an appreciation of the German Autobahn network as a necessary component of a national defense system while he was serving as Supreme Commander of the Allied forces in Europe during World War II.[9] He recognized that the proposed system would also provide key ground transport routes for military supplies and troop deployments in case of an emergency or foreign invasion

About 70 percent of the construction and maintenance costs of Interstate Highways in the United States have been paid through user fees, primarily the fuel taxes collected by the federal, state, and local governments. To a much lesser extent they have been paid for by tolls collected on toll highways and bridges. The Highway Trust Fund, established by the Highway Revenue Act in 1956, prescribed a three-cent-per-gallon fuel tax, soon increased to 4.5 cents per gallon. In 1993, the tax was increased to 18.4 cents per gallon, where it remains as of 2012.

The rest of the costs of these highways are borne by general fund receipts, bond issues, designated property taxes, and other taxes. The federal contribution comes overwhelmingly from motor vehicle and fuel taxes (93.5 percent in 2007), and it makes up about 60 percent of the contributions by the states. However, any local government contributions are overwhelmingly from sources besides user fees. The portion of the user fees spent on highways themselves covers about 57 percent of their costs, with about one-sixth of the user fees being sent to other programs, including the mass transit systems in large cities.

In the northeastern United States, some large sections of Interstate Highways that were planned or constructed before 1956 are still operated as toll roads. Others have had their construction bonds paid off and they have become toll-free, such as in Connecticut (I-95), Maryland (I-95), Virginia (I-95), and Kentucky (I-65).

Some Interstates are privately maintained ,e.g., the VMS company maintains I-35 in Texas

[Ya, right, the Interstate Highway system would have been built without the government—just like those coast-to-coast high speed trains and Newt Moonbases we're so proud to use daily! Big corporations and the uber-rich love us so much that they just want to do things for us! How nice! How visionary! WE DON'T NEED NO STINKING GOVERNMENT! –SteveB]

[20120823-06](#) 13:43 SteveB Re: Sign of the Times (reply to SteveM, above)

Of course that's not what he's saying! The whole subject is TAXES! The rich are not paying their fair share. Some businesses are not paying their fair share. They think they don't owe taxes because Ayn Rand says they created their businesses themselves, without help from society, therefore, they owe society nothing (or very little, like Mitt's 7% or so). Therefore, your Republican buddies are guaranteeing that you pay MORE, while their fat-cat friends pay LESS.

Always happy to bring you the truth free of commercials.

[20120823-03](#) 12:11 SteveM Fw: Photo: Special Republican Interstate Highway



[20120823-04](#) 12:24 Art Fw: From the Right: Obama Stops Soldier from Speaking

Not sure this is worth it, but I guess we have to keep trying to understand what is going on. The e-mail below came to me via a friend who lives in Germany and he got it from a local national, so this has spread well beyond our shores. I am sure most of my foreign friends are amazed. The e-mail is an outright lie and completely untrue. Yet I suspect that half or more of the people who read it believe it and pass it along as yet another example of how terrible this President is. The Snopes article just below provides the truth of the matter.

The question you have to ask yourself is:

1. If President Obama is so bad, why is it necessary to make up all of these lies.
2. Have the American people really become this stupid?

By the way, this has been Government Ethics 101 for all government personal, not just military, for a very long time.

Snopes.com: Military Speakers at Faith-Based Events:

<http://www.snopes.com/politics/religion/faithbased.asp#3mQ1XQ74peM5juSt.03>.

[Source of original email unknown, --SteveB]

Please pass this on. We need to, people must know that our freedom is being taken from us slowly but surely.

Obama Stops Soldier from Speaking (sent by Retired Vice Admiral Bob Scarborough, of Arlington, Va.)

I wanted to give you all some disturbing information on our wonderful president. I work with the Catch-A-Dream Foundation, which provides hunting and fishing trips to children with life-threatening illnesses. This past weekend we had our annual banquet/fund raiser event in Starkville . As a part of our program, we had scheduled Sgt. 1st Class Greg Stube to come; he's a highly decorated U.S. Army Green Beret and inspirational speaker who was severely injured while deployed overseas and didn't have much of a chance for survival. Greg is stationed at Ft. Bragg , NC and received permission from his commanding officer to come speak at our function.

Everything was on go until Obama made a policy that NO U.S. SERVICEMAN CAN SPEAK AT ANY FAITH-BASED PUBLIC EVENTS ANYMORE. Needless to say, Greg had to cancel his speaking event with us. Didn't know if anyone else was aware of this new policy. You're just starting to see the Obamanation. This is just how the Nazis did it in the 1930s -- slowly, one step at a time.

This should be forwarded to everyone regardless of party affiliation!

We have lost 50% of our freedom of speech in the last 2 years. The news media is not allowed to print anything negative about this evil Obama.

ARE YOU STILL GOING TO RE-ELECT HIM?????????????

Robert D. Sinacola
COL (Ret), AVN, USAR
Thanks To ALL Who Served And Are Serving
Please Pray For Our Troops And Leaders.
God Bless America ... Land That I love

20120823-05	12:48	SteveB	"The Fanatical GOP"
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"The capture of one of our great parties by fanatics is nothing to celebrate. A democracy needs at least two sane political parties."

"The Fanatical GOP" by Robert Reich, NationofChange

We're witnessing the capture by fanatics of what was once a great and important American political party.

The Republican Party platform committee now includes a provision calling for a constitutional amendment banning all abortions, without an exception for rape or incest. This is basically Missouri senatorial candidate Todd Akin's position. (At least the GOP platform doesn't assert that women's bodies automatically reject "legitimate" rapists' sperm.)

Paul Ryan, Romney's selection for vice president, has co-sponsored 38 anti-abortion measures while in the House of Representatives, including several containing no exception for pregnancies caused by rape or incest. But the GOP's fanaticism goes far beyond the its growing absolutism about abortion.

Ryan's proposed budget, approved by almost all House Republicans, is also an exercise in fanaticism. It replaces Medicare with vouchers that won't possibly keep up with rising healthcare costs — thereby shifting costs directly on to the elderly.

That budget also harms the poor and rewards the rich, but does little or nothing to reduce the federal budget deficit. Over 60 percent of its spending cuts come out of programs for lower-income Americans. Its tax cuts for the rich reduce revenues by \$4.6 trillion over the decade while saving the typical millionaire hundreds of thousands of dollars a year. The GOP's looniness doesn't even stop there. Republicans remain unwavering in their support of state laws allowing or encouraging the profiling of Latinos. And unrelenting in their war against gay rights.

It's not just women, seniors, budget hawks, the poor, Latinos, and gays who are catching on to the Republicans' extremism. Americans who don't fall into one of these categories are becoming alarmed, too — as they should. Although the GOP lurch to the right-wing margin of America may bode well for Democrats this coming Election Day, it bodes ill for America. **The capture of one of our great parties by fanatics is nothing to celebrate. A democracy needs at least two sane political parties.**

20120823-08	14:19	Ben	Photo: Today's Lunch at Apple
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Yam Thua Ngawk. "Shrimp Salad" doesn't do it justice. This is a Far East line Chef Alejandro special; as you know, Alex' dishes can range from wild complexity to fine, simple classics, but he thrives on subtlety. This dish was one of deceptive simplicity.

I didn't count, but the obvious ingredient was the dozen or so very large, perfect poached or steamed shrimp. They may have been lightly brined, or it may just have been the slight saltiness of the seawater from which they came, but they were moist, and (no surprise) not by any stretch of the imagination overcooked, as is so common and easy to do with shrimp. Getting them right, deep translucence just short of complete opacity, is an art of timing and observation. The shrimp were accompanied by crisp, fresh Chinese bean sprouts, thin parings of shallot, fine bits of mint, with a very light, nearly clear dressing of lime juice, fish sauce, and sugar; all was garnished with a light sprinkling of some slightly sweet unidentifiable peanut-fragment crunchy stuff.

A glass of fresh-squeeze lemonade merged beautifully with my light entree.

For me, for today, this was an ideal filling but light lunch.

So I took a liberty and accessorized with a tiny Faith Bomb: a petite Mini chocolate raspberry soffiato, a wonderfully soft and gooey treat of dense bittersweet chocolate cake with a Faith-made raspberry compote center. This is by far the tastiest combination of chocolate with raspberry I've had; it's not a combination that normally does a lot for me. Additives to chocolate, sure, but I usually prefer spices or herbs. This worked wonderfully for me, though! I had to unwrap the paper, scraping morsels from it with the edge of my fork...



[20120823-09](#) 15:38 Art Re: You Always Have Something to Say... (reply to SteveM, FotM Newsletter #210)

I just looked up the Queen of England one...totally bogus. So much for any of this being verifiable.

[20120823-13](#) 16:03 SteveB Re: You Always Have Something to Say... (reply to Art, above)

OK, great! Thanks, Art. I'll pass that info along to SteveM

And, if the President said "Cinco de Quatro"... well, I think that's pretty cute!

[20120823-24](#) 19:16 Art Re: You Always Have Something to Say... (reply to SteveB, above)

You know this is such BS. People like SteveM are impossible to reach. They only read what they want to believe and anything else is just "the biased liberal press". Not sure they are worth wasting time with. By the way according to SNOPEs, the Queen was given a I Pad or phone, I forget which, with pictures of her visit to the States in 2007 and show tunes which she reportedly loved.

Note how the teabags have become a bit more cunning and attach just enough truth to the statement to then make an outrageous lie by adding words like "tacky and the Presidents speeches" . It is just crap but as someone smarter than I said, "It is hard to have a logical conversation with someone who never used logic to get to their position in the first place."

20120823-25 19:37 SteveB Re: You Always Have Something to Say... (reply to Art, above)

Amen!

20120823-12 15:55 SteveG "The Fascinating Differences Between the Conservative & Liberal Personality"

"But if our partisan personalities are deeply rooted in our early development and wired in our brains, is honest and thoughtful consideration of our own biases and predeterminations enough, or even possible?"

Here is some people's opinion. Others say...

"The Fascinating Differences Between the Conservative and Liberal Personality" by Jared DeFife, AlterNet

Aug. 20, 2012, (<http://www.alternet.org/fascinating-differences-between-conservative-and-liberal-personality>)

"There are three things I have learned never to discuss with people: religion, politics, and the Great Pumpkin," laments Linus van Pelt in a 1961 *Peanuts* comic strip. Yet in today's hyperpartisan political climate, religion and politics are obsessively debated, while the "American people" that politicians and reporters constantly refer to seem hopelessly divided. Meanwhile, psychologists are increasingly exploring the political arena, examining not just the ideological differences, but also the numerous factors - temperamental, developmental, biological, and situational - that contribute to the formation and maintenance of partisan political beliefs.

Personality differences are a leading candidate in the race toward understanding the rift between political liberals and conservatives. Using data compiled from nearly 20,000 respondents, Columbia University researcher Dana Carney and colleagues found that two common personality traits reliably differentiated individuals with liberal or conservative identifications. Liberals reported greater openness, whereas conservatives reported higher conscientiousness. This means that liberals (at least in their own estimation) saw themselves as more creative, flexible, tolerant of ambiguity, and open to new ideas and experiences. Across the political personality divide, conservatives self-identified as more persistent, orderly, moralistic, and methodical. These personality differences were even reflected in the bedroom belongings and offices or workspaces of ideological undergrads, with liberal students collecting more CDs, books, movie tickets, and travel paraphernalia, as opposed to their conservative peers, who showed more sports décor, U.S. flags, cleaning supplies, calendars, and uncomfortable furniture. Lest you think that the partisan personality is a uniquely American phenomenon, similar findings on personality and political ideology have emerged in samples across the globe, from North America, Europe, and Australia.

Evidence suggests that these personality differences between liberals and conservatives begin to emerge at an early age. A 20-year longitudinal study by Jack and Jeanne Block showed that those who grew up to be liberals were originally assessed by their preschool teachers as more emotionally expressive, gregarious, and impulsive when compared to those who became conservatives, who were considered more inhibited, uncertain, and controlled. Liberals may show greater tolerance for diversity and creativity, but they may also be more impulsive, indecisive, and irresponsible. On the flip side, conservatives may be organized, stable, and thrifty, but also have stronger just-world beliefs (leading to a greater tolerance for inequality), and stronger fears of mortality and ambiguity. Even recent neuroscience work published in *Current Biology* from University College London identifies fundamental differences in the partisan brain. Brain scans revealed a larger amygdala in self-identified conservatives and a larger anterior cingulate cortex in liberals, leading the researchers to conclude that conservatives may be more acute at detecting threats around them, whereas liberals may be more adept at handling conflicting information and uncertainty.

Some evidence suggests, however, that we aren't always so divided. In situations that remind people of death and mortality (such as terrorist attacks or implicitly primed images of funeral hearses and chalk body outlines) conservatives and liberals alike gravitate toward more conservative leaders and beliefs. By contrast, greater

acceptance of liberal values occurs during events in which people feel disillusioned by government authorities and the politically powerful (such as the Vietnam War or after the 2008 housing crisis).

Of course, the field of psychology isn't immune to political biases and partisanship. Liberal psychology professors vastly outnumber their conservative counterparts by as much as 10 to 1 (perhaps conservatives have some justification for a general distrust of science and academia). A similar imbalance was found by Dyer Bilgrave and Robert Deluty in their 2002 survey of more than 200 clinical and counseling psychologists, published in the journal *Psychotherapy*. They also found that cognitive-behavioral therapists tended to hold more conservative religious and political beliefs than their more liberally oriented psychodynamic and humanistic-oriented colleagues. Other findings implicative for psychotherapy suggest that liberals and conservatives conceptualize different values in their family narratives, and that individuals fail to empathize completely with the nonpolitical concerns and problems of others if they're perceived as belonging to an opposing political party.

No matter which side of the couch they sit on, therapists are inevitably bound to confront political and moral issues in treatment. In research, practice, and training, therapists are expected to achieve the kind of bipartisan collaboration that politicians seem to only talk about. According to Bilgrave and Deluty, "Therapists should ask themselves regularly how their religious and political beliefs, values, and attitudes may be influencing their practice of therapy-how they see clients and their problems, how they help clients frame and understand their concerns, and how and in which direction they encourage clients to act." **But if our partisan personalities are deeply rooted in our early development and wired in our brains, is honest and thoughtful consideration of our own biases and predeterminations enough, or even possible?** And when even your furniture choices betray your political persuasions, then what does your office tell patients about you?

Resources

American Psychologist, 61, no. 7: 651-70; *Current Biology*, 21, no. 8: 677-80; *Psychotherapy*, 39, no. 3: 245-60.

20120823-22	18:46	Art	Re: "The Fascinating Differences Between the Conservative & Liberal Personality" (reply to SteveG, above)
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Thanks SteveG, really interesting. Still not sure where I sit.

20120823-17	16:23	Pam	Re: "The Fascinating Differences Between the Conservative & Liberal Personality" (reply to SteveG, above)
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Interesting article. I do think people are mostly born a "little liberal" or a "little conservative." (Thank you Gilbert and Sullivan.) Like so many things, I believe it's innate. My dad and I were always more liberal, my mother and brother more conservative. My BFF couldn't be a liberal if you offered her a million dollars, and she says she absolutely can't vote for Obama. (Why is she my BFF, you ask? Because she's a good person.) I just read a great article in *The Atlantic* (I'll post a link if I can figure it out) about racism in America and how it's affecting Obama's presidency. We do not live in a post-racial society, more's the pity. I truly believe that much of Congress's obstructionism is racist at its core.

20120823-19	16:42	SteveB	Re: "The Fascinating Differences Between the Conservative & Liberal Personality" (reply to Pam, above)
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Agree completely about the racism. But, of course, Rush would say that just proves my "reverse racism".

That's how much sense these racists make!

20120823-14	16:03	SteveB	Fw: Avaaz Petition: Help the Lakota Sioux Save Their Sacred Black Hills Land!
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from Avaaz:

This weekend an area considered sacred by the Native Sioux people could be auctioned off to the highest bidder, to potentially be bulldozed into a road or a golf course. The Sioux have launched a last-ditch campaign to save their land - if we join them now we can stop the sell off.

For generations the Sioux have used this undeveloped but privately owned stretch of prairie in the Black Hills of South Dakota for important annual ceremonies, but this Saturday's auction could pave the way for its destruction. That's why Avaaz member Sara Jumping Eagle, of the Oglala Lakota Sioux tribe, started a petition asking the government to protect the land by designating it a historical landmark. Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar has the power to do that, but to push him to use it, we need to show that the Sioux have support from every corner of the country.

There's no time to lose, the auction is this Saturday. Stand with Sara and the Sioux tribes of the Dakotas to save this land from the auction block.

Pe' Sla ("The heart of all that is") is an area in the Black Hills of South Dakota, not far from Mount Rushmore, that's at the center of the Lakota Sioux's creation story, a place Sioux families visit every Spring for important rituals of rebirth and renewal. **More than a hundred years ago, the US Government stole the Black Hills from the Sioux after gold was found there**, and the treaty granting them "permanent" land rights was ripped to shreds. In 1980, the Supreme Court ruled on behalf of the Sioux Nation, ceding that their land had been taken unlawfully, but the Sioux have refused to accept compensation, saying the land has never been for sale.

Now with Pe 'Sla at risk of being lost forever, an unprecedented coalition of Sioux tribes have come together launching an online fundraiser to buy back the land, but with only days to go until the auction, they are nowhere near raising the millions needed. That's why taking the land out from under the auctioneer's gavel is the only real way to save it, and why Avaaz member Sara Jumping Eagle is asking for support from around the country to help stop the sale.

Sara tells us, "Pe `Sla is a symbol of a resurgence and belief in who we are as Lakota Oyate (the people). If somebody were to come and build a road or desecrate it in any way, it would be like the Wounded Knee Massacre happening all over again. Can you imagine the Vatican, or Mecca or Bethlehem being bulldozed for an amusement park?"

Right now if enough of us support the Sioux and their fight to protect this land central to their tradition and their religion, we can help correct a longstanding historic injustice, and make the United States a little more united around the rights of Native people. We only have four days to stop the sale -- sign the urgent petition and please share with your friends and family:

http://www.avaaz.org/en/petition/Help_Lakota_Sioux_Save_Buy_Pe_Sla_Sacred_Black_Hills_Land/.

From the Massai people of Tanzania fighting displacement, to indigenous tribes of the Amazon battling a destructive mega dam, the Avaaz community has long stood side by side with native people defending their rights. Here in the US let's not let history repeat itself -- and join hands with the Sioux to protect what's sacred.

With hope, determination, and spirit, Joseph, Ian, Emily, Emma, Ricken and the whole Avaaz team

More Information

Sioux tribes worry sale of sacred site in South Dakota's Black Hills could lead to development (*Washington Post*), http://www.washingtonpost.com/national/sioux-tribes-worry-sale-of-sacred-site-in-south-dakotas-black-hills-could-lead-to-development/2012/08/18/ede0c628-e961-11e1-9739-eef99c5fb285_story.html.

The Sioux campaign to buy back the Black Hills that belong to them (*The Guardian*), <http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2012/aug/16/sioux-campaign-buy-back-black-hills>.

UN human rights expert calls on US to consult with indigenous people over land sale (UN News Centre), <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=42723&Cr=United+States&Cr1>.

Exclusive: Sioux Spiritual Leader Speaks Out on Land Sale at Sacred Site (Truth Out), <http://truth-out.org/news/item/11035-exclusive-truthout-interview-sioux-spiritual-leader-speaks-out-on-land-sale-at-sacred-site>.

Black Hills Auction: The Auction of the Sacred (Winona LaDuke), http://indiancountrytodaymedianetwork.com/ict_sbc/black-hills-auction-the-auction-of-the-sacred.

Pe' Sla: Help Save Lakota Sioux Sacred Land! (Sioux fundraiser to save the land) <http://www.indiegogo.com/PeSla-LakotaHeartland>.



[20120823-20](#)

16:51

MarthaH

"Texas Democrats: Judge Who Said Obama Could Trigger Civil War Should Quit"

Just when I think...something else.

"Texas Democrats: Judge Who Said Obama Could Trigger Civil War Should Quit" by Josh Levs, CNN

Aug. 24, 2012, (<http://edition.cnn.com/2012/08/23/us/texas-judge-warning/index.html>)

Texas Democrats are calling for the resignation of a Republican elected county judge who warned this week that the nation could descend into civil war if President Barack Obama is re-elected.

"It's really up to Judge (Tom) Head to do the right thing and resign and stop embarrassing Lubbock County," said Kenny Ketner, who became the county Democratic Party's chief Monday.

"I wish we were getting worldwide attention for something better than a crazy county judge," Ketner told CNN. "But what are you going to do?"

There is no recall process for Head's office in Texas, Ketner said.

The county's Republican Party chief, Carl Tepper, accused the Democrats of "opportunism" and said he had called Head and left him a message offering "moral support."

"I don't agree with him, but everyone has their opinion," Tepper said. "I can respectfully disagree with him and he can still be an elected official."

While Tepper said he had not heard from state Republican Party chiefs, the Texas Democratic Party did weigh in with a statement.

"This nonsense is what passes for mainstream in today's Republican Party," the statement said. "It's not only ridiculous, it's dangerous. It's crystal clear that Judge Head should resign."

In remarks this week, Head called for a well-equipped force to battle the United Nations troops that he said Obama might bring in.

The comments by Head, who oversees emergency planning efforts, were broadcast by CNN affiliate KJTV. He made similar remarks on radio station FOX Talk 950.

Saying that as the county's emergency management coordinator he has to "think about the very worst thing that can happen and prepare for that and hope and pray for the best," Head told radio host Jeff Klotzman that he believes "in this political climate and financial climate, what is the very worst thing that could happen right now? Obama gets back in the White House. No. God forbid."

Referring to unexplained "executive orders" and other documents that Obama and "his minions have filed," Head said, "regardless of whether the Republicans take over the Senate, which I hope they do, he is going to make the United States Congress and he's going to make the Constitution irrelevant. He's got his czars in place that don't answer to anybody."

Obama, Head said, will "try to give the sovereignty of the United States away to the United Nations. What do you think the public's going to do when that happens? We are talking civil unrest, civil disobedience, possibly, possibly civil war. ... I'm not talking just talking riots here and there. I'm talking Lexington, Concord, take up arms, get rid of the dictator. OK, what do you think he is going to do when that happens? He is going to call in the U.N. troops, personnel carriers, tanks and whatever."

Head vowed to personally stand "in front of their personnel carriers and say, 'You're not coming in here.' And I've asked the sheriff. I said, 'Are you going to back me on this?' And he said, 'Yeah, I'm going to back you.' Well, I don't want a bunch of rookies back there who have no training and little equipment. I want seasoned veteran people who are trained that have got equipment. And even then, you know we may have two or three hundred deputies facing maybe a thousand U.N. troops. We may have to call out the militia."

Sheriff Kelly Rowe told KJTV there had been no conversation about such a civil war scenario. The two have discussed contingencies for emergency management, he said.

The lone Democrat on the Lubbock County Commissioner's Court, Gilbert Flores, described Head with a colorful West Texas saying: "He's a six-pack short of a full case of beer, if you know what I mean."

KJTV reported that the warning was linked to taxes. Head "indicates a tax increase is needed to shore up law enforcement to protect us," the station reported, adding that a tax increase is under consideration that "would largely benefit the district attorney and sheriff's offices. But the emphasis is more on salary competitiveness than doomsday scenarios."

On Wednesday at a county commissioner meeting, he emphasized that his remarks were about "worst-case scenario in my opinion," and added, "Do I think those are going to happen? Probably not."

Also Wednesday, he told the Lubbock Avalanche-Journal, "I cannot divorce my theology and my philosophy from me, from my office, you know? I am pro-life, I am pro-gun rights, and if you're going to vote for me and say you don't believe in gun rights, you don't want me in office, so you won't vote for me."

Attorney Rod Hobson jokingly put up U.N. flags outside his Lubbock office, KJTV reported. "When I saw the story I thought, once again, Lubbock is going to be the laughingstock of the entire nation," Hobson said. "What makes it so sad is he is our elected county judge, who is in charge of a multimillion-dollar budget. That is scary. It's like the light's on, but no one is home. ... I'd just like to think he's off his meds."

But video from the Wednesday meeting showed at least one citizen supporting him. "Judge Head, thank you, and God bless," the citizen said.

Head did not respond to e-mail or phone calls to his office on Thursday.

Both Ketner of the county Democratic Party and Tepper of the county Republican Party said they have received calls from people on both sides of the issue.

While many callers to Ketner have asked if there is any way to boot him from office, some have said they support the judge, Ketner said.

Tepper said Republicans are split over the issue. "There's quite a divergent mix of views" within the party, he said. "Some people are very staunch defenders of Judge Head. And some people don't appreciate how he said what he said."

Democrats are pushing for members of the public to show up Monday to a county commission budget meeting. "Normally, nobody shows up," Ketner said.

But given the attention Head's remarks are getting, this meeting just might draw a crowd, he said.

20120823-26	20:37	Pam	Re: "Texas Democrats: Judge Who Said Obama Could Trigger Civil War Should Quit" (reply to MarthaH, above)
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The right wing in America is CRAZY. And they're setting the agenda. Politicians cater to them, and they get what they want, like a toddler with a temper tantrum. Makes me sick.

20120823-23	19:00	Art	Re: "Texas Democrats: Judge Who Said Obama Could Trigger Civil War Should Quit" (reply to MarthaH, above)
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There has got to be some sort of medical explanation for these home grown wackos who live in a fantasy world. I think you have one in Greencastle. Are they really that stupid? Could be. I think however it must be a bit more complex. They are not very bright bulbs to begin with, who are heavily influenced by what little stimulation they receive through movies, TV and the Internet. I'll bet you, if a study were run, they have never gone anywhere, except maybe on a Caribbean cruise, speak no foreign languages and haven't read a real book in 20 years.

20120823-27	20:42	Pam	Re: "Texas Democrats: Judge Who Said Obama Could Trigger Civil War Should Quit" (reply to Art, above)
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And yet they exert a ton of influence. Politicians are scared of them, and Fox, Rush, & co. keep fanning the flames.

[20120823-28](#) 22:33 SteveB Re: "Texas Democrats: Judge Who Said Obama Could Trigger Civil War Should Quit" (reply to Pam, above)

They have destroyed the positive attitude in America that would help us overcome Bush's Depression. Next: America? If we let them...

[20120823-29](#) 23:50 MarthaH Re: "Texas Democrats: Judge Who Said Obama Could Trigger Civil War Should Quit" (reply to SteveB, above)

My father's favorite expression was "Empty wagons rattle." This mentality rattles more than it studies. Unfortunately, there are more than a few in Greencastle. There are some names you would recognize and no surprises in the educational level, etc. One has made a lot of money and has toys sitting around. His white toy's tire kit [used to be continental kit, we said!] says VOTE THEM OUT in tacky letters...Remember Male Chauvinist Pig? He's a herd of them by himself! And he seems to be the ramrod of the Teabaggers locally. I really should take my senior government final exam to a meeting and see who could pass it. Simplicity is theirs, but it's not a simple world. Those who fan the hatred laugh all the way to the bank. The dominoes seem to be falling and the future at jeopardy. SURELY there are more intelligent folks in the country than these who want to have theirs and no one else have anything. Yes, surveys say we are headed in the wrong direction--but pollsters never ask who is responsible? When I see every day something REALLY STUPID it is distressing. Did our ancestors feel this way as the Civil War went on? WW I and then WW II?

How stupid are the voters? What fans a majority to make the effort to become leaders? What makes a minority rise up and become a majority? We have always had in's and out's in election cycles, BUT, as we creep towards being a theocracy like what we fight in faraway places, why are not intelligent people winning over clever ones with tunnel vision? Why do some good people not believe the truth? Once an "R" always one? NOT I! [and nameless others, :-)] The lies are easier and say what they feel in their guts with their paranoia...and pandering to get power is backed by \$\$\$\$\$\$, thanks to the Supreme Court. Behind closed doors do they admit they SCREWED UP????

Funny thing: The first two people to call me a liberal were my pastors, one a few years back and one more recently. Really??? I thought I was just practical...I have my conservative thoughts and actions...I truly believe we are awakened to the WHOLE world through education, formal and personal. Those with narrow minds were brainwashed into thinking only what they hear superficially and feel makes them comfy...while the rest of the world awaits their exploration! My job through their young lives has been to try to awaken our grandchildren to possibilities, not limitations. What makes others limit themselves to a narrow tunnel? What makes them believe the first words they hear and never question them? I think we are back to education again...hmmm...And now education seems taken over by limitations, too.

Just a morning rant. And I didn't even get to racism... Bias destroys, education builds. Now I will duck my head and live in my own world so the rage doesn't destroy me, :-). My, reading soothes the soul.

[20120823-30](#) 23:55 SteveB Re: "Texas Democrats: Judge Who Said Obama Could Trigger Civil War Should Quit" (reply to MarthaH, above)

I love it, Martha! I'm happy to have your words to start my day! Thank you,

Now...I do completely disagree...haha!

[20120823-21](#) 18:04 SteveB "Pew: Middle Class Poorer, Earning Less And Shrinking"

Of course! All the money is being redistributed upward to the fat cats like Mitt R0mney!

"Pew: Middle Class Poorer, Earning Less And Shrinking" by Eyder Peralta, NPR

Aug. 22, 2012, (<http://www.npr.org/blogs/thetwo-way/2012/08/22/159798269/pew-middle-class-poorer-earning-less-and-shrinking>)

The researchers at Pew Social & Demographic Trends aren't holding back in their new report on the middle class. It calls the last 11 years, "the lost decade" for the country's middle class:

<http://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2012/08/22/the-lost-decade-of-the-middle-class/>.

The highlight from the report issued today is that the middle class is poorer, earning less and shrinking.

In its press release, Pew reports:

These stark assessments are based on findings from a new nationally representative Pew Research Center survey that includes 1,287 adults who describe themselves as middle class, supplemented by the Center's analysis of data from the U.S. Census Bureau and Federal Reserve Board of Governors.

Fully 85% of self-described middle-class adults say it is more difficult now than it was a decade ago for middle-class people to maintain their standard of living. Of those who feel this way, 62% say "a lot" of the blame lies with Congress, while 54% say the same about banks and financial institutions, 47% about large corporations, 44% about the Bush administration, 39% about foreign competition and 34% about the Obama administration. Just 8% blame the middle class itself a lot.

Most of what you need to know is in these graphs:

They show that the median household income for example, dropped from \$72,956 in 2000 to \$69,487. Perhaps the most dramatic figure is that median net worth took a major hit during the recession. It plummeted from \$152,950 to \$93,150.

Another interesting graph shows that in past decades, the middle class continues to lose ground to upper incomes when you aggregate household income.

For example in 1970, the middle class held 62 percent of the income in the country. The upper income held 29 percent. Those numbers have now flipped: The middle class is at 45 percent and the upper income class is at 46 percent.

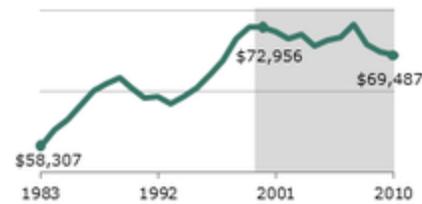
It's important to note that Pew considers three-person household making \$39,418 to \$118,255 middle class.

When asked, most said it took at least \$70,000 to be middle class.

A Decade of Decline

Middle-Tier Median Household Income Falls ...

Incomes are scaled to reflect a three-person household (in 2011 dollars)



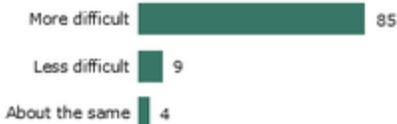
... Median Net Worth Plummets ...

in 2011 dollars



... and the Middle Class Says its Lifestyle is Harder to Maintain

% of middle-class who say it is ... for middle class to maintain standard of living today than 10 years ago

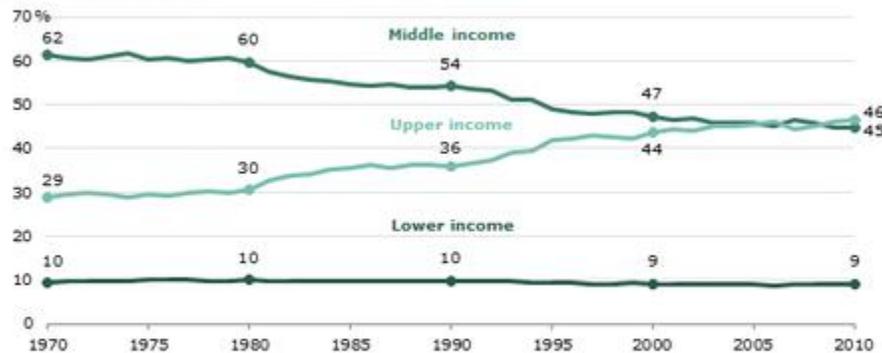


Notes: Income and wealth trends based on households with household-size adjusted incomes 67% to 200% of the national median. Attitudes chart based on respondents who say they are middle class, n=1,287. "About the same" is a volunteered category. "Don't know/Refused" not shown.

Source: Pew Research tabulations of the Current Population Survey, Annual Social and Economic Supplements, 1984-2011, and Survey of Consumer Finances, 1983-2010; Pew Research survey, July 16-26, 2012

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

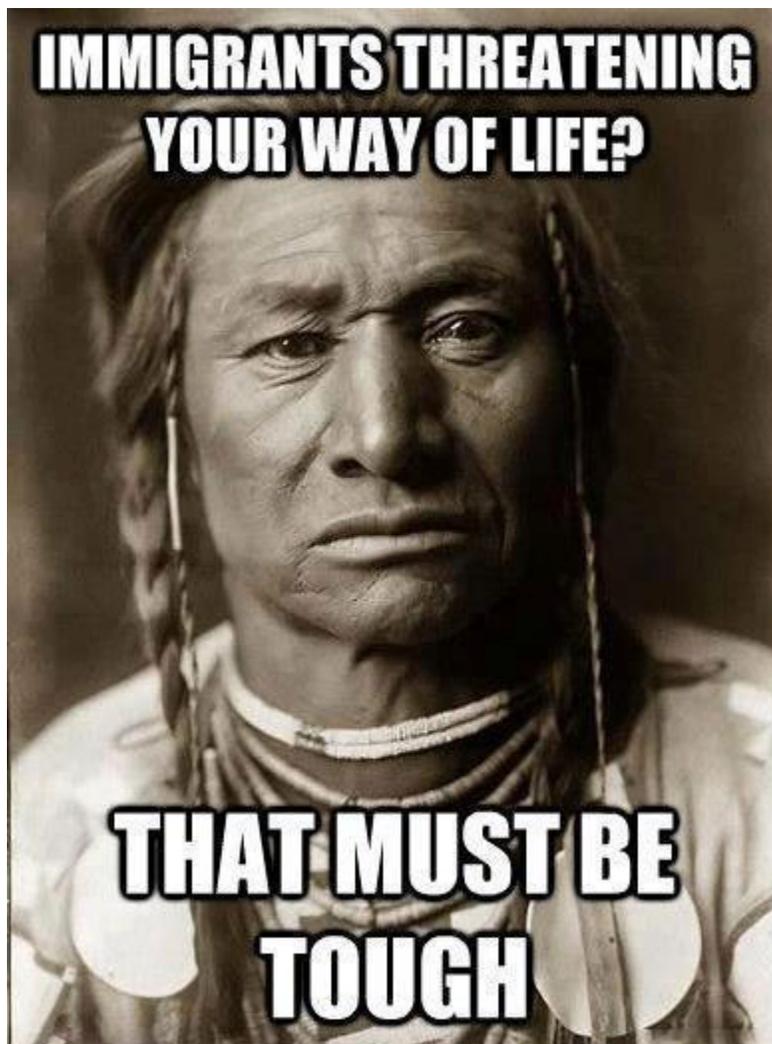
Percentage Distribution of U.S. Aggregate Household Income, by Income Tier, 1970-2010



Notes: Households are assigned to income categories based on their size-adjusted income in the calendar year prior to the survey year (e.g., 2010 income is reported in the 2011 survey). Their unadjusted incomes are then totaled to compute the share of an income group in U.S. aggregate household income. Percentages in each year may not add to 100% due to rounding.

Source: Pew Research Center tabulations of the Current Population Survey, Annual Social and Economic Supplements, 1971-2011

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<http://www.wayfaring.info/2008/07/13/devils-tower-national-monument/>



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

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

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

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FRIENDS OF THE MIDDLE **NEWSLETTER #212 — AUG. 27, 2012**

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

INDEX: Click here.

Titanic Tax Rip-Off of Middle Class America

(posted by Steven W. Baker / SteveB, Aug. 27, 2012)

Thank you, Mitt. It all becomes clearer now. I think Mitt R0mney may end-up doing more damage to the tax rip-offs of the super-rich than anything ever has. At least, I hope so! For the good of our nation, we should all hope so...all except the super-rich like R0mney and the R0mney wannabe, of course... And these thieves of \$trillions in taxes claim to be concerned about the deficit? LOL!

"\$Trillions Stashed in Tax Havens" by Stephen Lendman, OpEdNews

Aug. 25, 2012, (<http://www.opednews.com/articles/Trillions-Stashed-in-Tax-H-by-Stephen-Lendman-120825-86.html>)



(Stolen wealth hidden tax free.)

A new Tax Justice Network (TJN) USA report reveals an estimated \$21 to \$32 trillion of hidden and stolen wealth stashed largely tax-free secretly.

Titled "The Price of Offshore Revisited", it explains what financial insiders know but won't discuss. Many of them have their own hidden wealth. (http://tjn-usa.org/storage/documents/Price_of_Offshore_Revisited_72612.docx)

TJN describes a "subterranean" systemic "economic equivalent of an astrophysical black hole." The higher estimate above exceeds US GDP twofold.

It's mind-boggling. It's hard imagining a tiny percent of privileged elites control this much wealth secretly. It's worse knowing it's largely tax free. It's appalling that governments let them get away with it.

Wall Street and other major banks manage it. Their business is fraud and grand theft. Private banking operations yield huge profits. Keeping funds secreted tax free attracts rich clients. Private capital globally is attracted. It's welcome from anyone, "no questions asked."

Government policies protect them. Societal costs are huge. Tax justice is absent. Hotel magnate Leona Helmsley once said only little people pay taxes. TJN's report bears her out.

A vast "global offshore industry" is explained. It's largely tax-free. It's controlled by the world's richest, most powerful elites. Estimating amounts secreted takes tedious data mining.

Previous estimates relied more on rough judgments. TJN used several methods. They include available data sources, estimation methods, and core assumptions. They're open to peer review and public scrutiny.

Four key approaches were used:

1. A "sources-and-uses" country-by-country model.
2. An "accumulated offshore wealth" model.
3. An "offshore investor portfolio" model.
4. Best-guess estimates of offshore assets held by the world's top 50 private banks.

Familiar Wall Street, European, and other global financial institutions comprise them.

Current data gotten from global central banks, the World Bank, IMF, UN, and national accounts were used. Other evidence includes:

1. "Transfer mispricing" data.
2. Demand for cross-border liquid "mattress money" data.
3. Current research data on the offshore private banking market's size.

TJN believes its work comprises the "most rigorous and comprehensive" data ever produced. It challenges anyone to contest it.

In overall size through 2010, it estimates hidden global wealth at from \$21 - \$32 trillion. It's invested "virtually tax-free" through a still-expanding black hole of more than 80 secret jurisdictions. It calls estimates conservative.

Developed countries don't face debt problems. They've got huge offshore tax evasion ones. Repatriation would reduce debt substantially. Doing so would bring it well within tolerable levels.

Only financial wealth is included. Much else isn't measured. It includes real estate, yachts, racehorses, gold, art, and other categories not easily quantified.

The offshore economy alone has an enormous negative impact on the domestic tax bases of affected countries. They've had significant private capital outflows for years, decades or longer.

TJN focused on 139 countries. They're mainly "low-middle income" ones. The World Bank and IMF maintain data on them.

Since the 1970s, private bankers let rich elites accumulate trillions in hidden wealth. At the same time, these nations experienced structural adjustment harshness.

They became debt-entrapped. Some borrowed themselves into insolvency. They sold off public assets at fire sale prices. They impoverished their people. They colluded with big money interests at their expense.

Through 2010, they accumulated over \$4 trillion in debt. Minus foreign reserves invested in First World securities, it's \$2.8 trillion. Including hidden wealth, they're net lenders.

Key is that assets of these countries are held by wealthy elites. Ordinary people bear the burden of debts.

In the 1980s, an unnamed Fed official said:

The problem is not that these countries don't have any assets. The problem is they're all in Miami and other global cities. They're home to private financial institutions.

Hidden offshore wealth correlates positively with loan amounts to indebted countries. Large amounts of borrowed capital were secreted lawlessly in global tax havens.

Local elites continue "vot(ing) with financial feet." At the same time, their public sectors borrow heavily and ordinary people go begging.

Although First World countries borrow most, they and elites in them remain global financiers.

Wealth is concentrated in select private hands "in a handful of source countries." Many are regarded as debtors.

Through 2010, 50 top private banks managed over \$12 trillion in cross-border assets from individual clients, trusts and foundations.

Smaller banks, investment firms, insurers, and non-bank intermediaries like hedge funds and independent money managers handle additional amounts up to an overall \$32 trillion estimate.

TJN calls these enablers part of a global "tax injustice system." Complicit governments let them operate at the expense of their own people.

Since the late 1970s, investigative journalists, tax authorities, drug enforcement officials, terrorist trackers, national security experts, and others became aware about vast amounts of money stashed in "offshore" tax havens.

Private banking "professional enablers" manage it. They make fortunes doing it. The term "offshore" refers less to physical locations than virtual ones anywhere. They're often "networks of legal and quasi-legal entities and arrangements." They operate in the interests of money managers.

Physical locations can be anywhere. Legal structures typically are assets owned by anonymous offshore companies in one jurisdiction. Trusts are in another. Trustees are in multiple places globally.

Clients are rich elites, companies, and criminals. They include real estate speculators, technology tycoons, oil sheiks, underworld millionaires, heads of state, despots, and drug lords, among others. Their common needs include:

1. Anonymity and confidentiality.

2. Minimizing or avoiding taxes.
3. Skilled money management.
4. Ability to access and manage their wealth anywhere.
5. Secure places to reside, visit, or hide.
6. Assured financial security no matter what's happening in the real world.

Skilled professionals provide these services globally. Money management happens in a virtual world. They live under one set of rules. Another exists for all others. It's gone on for decades. Global banks thrive on it. It's one of their most profitable operations.

Physical locations operate from Bermuda, the Cayman Islands, Nauru, St. Kitts, Antigua, Tortola, Switzerland, the Channel Islands, Monaco, Cyprus, Gibraltar, Liechtenstein, and elsewhere.

Over 3.5 million paper companies, thousands of shell banks and insurers, more than half the world's registered commercial ships above 100 tons, and tens of thousands of shell subsidiaries of giant global banks, accounting firms, and various other companies operate there.

Nonetheless, conventional havens are misleading. Despite their vast financial infrastructure, most super-rich elites want more security. They also need easy access to First World capital markets, competent attorneys and accountants, independent judiciaries, and laws protecting them.

Professional "enablers" provide all needed services. Managing vast wealth is complex. Many skills are required. They include financial, economic, legal, accounting, and insurance. Super-rich elites demand and get the best.

Haven locations offer more than tax avoidance. Almost anything goes on. It includes fraud, bribery, illegal gambling, money laundering, human and sex trafficking, arms dealing, toxic waste dumping, conflict diamonds and endangered species trafficking, bootlegged software, and endless other lawless practices.

It's impossible to estimate total lawful and illegal wealth from all sources. It's vastly more than estimates within the parameters of TJN's study. Credit Suisse tried.

Through mid-2011, it puts total financial and non-financial global wealth at \$231 trillion. It's a best guess. It's tenfold TJN's top figure. It's mind-boggling. It's roughly 3.5 times global GDP. In 2011, it was about \$65 trillion.

Imagine the good a small percent of global wealth could do for billions of disadvantaged people. Imagine its ability to stabilize and recapitalize troubled countries. Imagine a world where everyone shares its wealth. Imagine one worth living in.

Global wealth represents low-hanging fruit out of reach. Instead of everyone benefitting, few do at the expense of all others. Injustice that great begs for transformational change. From the bottom up is the only way possible. Shedding light on what's dark is a good way to start.

(Stephen Lendman lives in Chicago. His new book is titled *How Wall Street Fleeces America: Privatized Banking, Government Collusion and Class War*, <http://www.claritypress.com/Lendman.html>)

(I was born in 1934, am a retired, progressive small businessman concerned about all the major national and world issues, committed to speak out and write about them.)

"How Romney's \$Millions Went Tax-Free Overseas" by Joe Conason, *The National Memo*

Aug. 25, 2012, (<http://www.nationalmemo.com/foreign-affairs-how-romneys-millions-went-tax-free-overseas/>)

On the same day that Mitt Romney cracked his birther "joke," new evidence indicated that he and his partners at Bain Capital have used questionable methods to avoid federal taxes – including a scheme that transforms corporate stock into untaxed offshore "derivatives," and a practice that converts management fees into capital gains, which are taxed at a far lower rate.

While nobody has asked to see the Republican candidate's birth certificate, as he said at a Michigan rally on Friday, everybody has a renewed interest in examining the tax returns he continues to withhold.

The complex and tricky tax shelters used by Bain Capital continued to emerge from as lawyers and other experts examined the hundreds of pages of previously confidential company documents uncovered by the Gawker website in an exclusive series this week. The authenticity of the documents was confirmed by a Bain spokesperson, who said that the company deplors the public posting of its proprietary materials.

In a sense, the latest revelations about how Bain protected its vast income from taxation are scarcely surprising to anyone familiar with the world of private equity where Romney made his fortune, estimated at \$250 million or more. Avoiding taxes is among the most important attractions of that industry for the wealthy clients it aims to attract.

But several experts who have looked over the new Bain documents have warned that dubious legal tactics may have been employed by some of the company's investment vehicles, including several that are listed on the partial returns that Romney has already released. Those experts, such as Victor Fleischer, a law professor at the University of Colorado, and Daniel Shaviro, who teaches tax law at New York University's law school, have raised questions about both the equity "swap" and fee conversion maneuvers.

Companies like Bain make money both from investment income, which is taxed at the lower capital gains rate, and from management fees, which are taxed as ordinary income like wages. If the firm can somehow transform its management fees into capital investments, then it can avoid the 35 percent top federal income tax rate, and pay the 15 percent capital gains rate instead. That is what Bain evidently does to keep its partners' taxes low – around the 13 percent rate that Romney admits to paying. But critics like Fleischer say this is an abusive tactic that cannot be justified by law, even though the IRS has never attempted to stop companies that use it.

"Unlike carried interest, which is unseemly but perfectly legal, Bain's management fee conversions are not legal," the Colorado professor wrote on his blog. "If challenged in court, Bain would lose. The Bain partners, in my opinion, misreported their income if they reported these converted fees as capital gain instead of ordinary income."

Equally troubling is the use of offshore accounts to avoid taxation on stock holdings. This tactic is called a "total return equity swap," because it involves swapping real equities for derivative paper investments that provide all the same dividends as the stock itself – but aren't subject to federal taxes. According to Shaviro, this practice was sufficiently blatant to elicit a warning from the IRS two years ago. He wrote recently that those who used it over the past decade "were coming perilously close to committing tax fraud, in cases where the economic equivalence to direct [stock] ownership was too great."

In the complex territory of tax law, precise boundaries aren't always clear. What makes the "total return equity swap" potentially perilous for Romney, however, is the use of foreign accounts to avoid taxes, which is what many Americans suspect him of doing. Despite the accounts that he has maintained in Switzerland, the Cayman Islands, Luxembourg, Bermuda and other tax havens, Romney's campaign has repeatedly denied, with little credibility, that his wealth was invested abroad to evade taxes.

The proof may well lie within the tax returns that he is so determined to conceal. Wisecracks about the president's alleged foreign birthplace may not distract concerned voters from the overseas accounts where Romney's money has been hidden.

20120826-02

06:03

SteveB

"Mitt Romney Reaped Huge Tax Benefits Based on 'Active' Role at Bain Capital"

"Mitt Romney Reaped Huge Tax Benefits Based on 'Active' Role at Bain Capital" by Zach Carter, Ryan Grim, and Jason Cherkis

Aug. 26, 2012, (http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/08/26/romney-bain-taxes_n_1828816.html)

(WASHINGTON) Mitt Romney has repeatedly insisted during the presidential campaign that layoffs and other controversy surrounding Bain Capital companies for the past decade are not his responsibility, because he retired in 1999. When tax experts charged that he benefited from legally dubious tax avoidance strategies employed by Bain, his campaign noted that the investments are kept in a blind trust completely out of his control.

"As we have said many times before, Governor and Mrs. Romney's assets are managed on a blind basis. They do not control the investment of these assets. The investment decisions are made by a trustee," spokeswoman Michele Davis said.

But according to his 2010 tax return, when the Internal Revenue Service comes calling in April, Romney has a different answer: The presumptive GOP nominee reaps lucrative tax breaks for "active" participation in the private equity firm he founded, as well as a host of other investments.

As David Kautter, a tax expert at American University, explains, the concept of active investment has different meanings for the IRS and for regular people. "When you say you're actively involved in all these businesses, people do think, OK, you're actively involved. But the tax law has its own definition," he said.

The IRS advises that "[f]actors that indicate active participation include making decisions involving the operation or management of the activity, performing services for the activity, and hiring and discharging employees. Factors that indicate a lack of active participation include lack of control in managing and operating the activity, having authority only to discharge the manager of the activity, and having a manager of the activity who is an independent contractor rather than an employee."

Even if Romney could persuade the IRS his involvement was legitimately active, that still leaves him in a rhetorical jam: For tax purposes, he claims an active status; for political purposes, he claims to have zero to do with the investments.

The distinction is valuable, for the IRS treats passive and active income and losses differently. If a passive investment loses money, the taxpayer can only write off that loss if passive gains have also been made. But active losses can be written off at a 35 percent rate and deducted from the taxpayer's ordinary income. In other words, a taxpayer wants active losses, not passive losses. So by describing many of his investments as active, Romney saves himself millions of dollars in taxes.

With those active investments, he is also securing a tax break few Americans enjoy: When he wins, he's paying a 15 percent rate on the gain. When he loses, he's writing it off at 35 percent, meaning that tax policy is subsidizing Romney's risk in his Bain investments.

In other words, Romney didn't build that, at least not without taxpayer backing.

Federal rules allow many of these tax loopholes. But under the technical terms of the retirement package that Romney negotiated for himself, he has borne a lighter tax load than most other retired financial professionals. And the unusually large scope of his deductions and the generous rate at which they are recognized have some tax experts questioning their validity.

Romney's 2010 tax return lists \$301,630 in "trade or business interest" deductions and \$503,737 in "trade or business expense" deductions -- all of it described as expenses from his business partnerships, including Bain. Specifically from his various Bain-related activities, Romney scored a total of \$547,525 in such deductions.

These kinds of deductions are only available to "active" participants in business partnerships. While Romney filed as an active participant for tax purposes, there is no evidence that he took part in Bain management decisions in 2010, and he has denied doing so.

The sophistication with which Romney used Bain's later efforts to boost his own income could serve as fodder for political campaign advertisements. Since Romney has been willing to profit from Bain's later activity, the Obama campaign may well argue that such practices are fair game for attack ads. Some Democrats are already on the attack.

"Governor Romney appears to be saying one thing to the American people and one thing to the Internal Revenue Service," Rep. Brad Miller (D-N.C.) said to The Huffington Post. "Right now we are just seeing inconsistent statements. The American people are entitled to know more than that. If there's a legalistic distinction, we are entitled to know what that is. ... Has he played too close to the line or over the line?"

It is also possible that these deductions are all legitimate expenses for Bain and the handful of Goldman Sachs subsidiaries in which Romney is a partner. But listing personal expenses as business expenses is not allowed.

In addition, some tax experts are surprised by the size of the deductions he takes as business expenses and the aggressive nature of the deductions.

"One question is just the amount of the expenses," said Rebecca Wilkins, senior tax policy counsel at Citizens for Tax Justice. "At half a million dollars, you have to wonder what all of that is."

Romney's income can basically be divided into two parts. His "ordinary" income triggers the top 35 percent tax rate to which America's wealthiest earners are subject. But most of his income comes in the form of capital gains, which are taxed at only 15 percent. According to the *Washington Post*, 50 percent of all capital gains in the United States flow to the top 0.1 percent of taxpayers.

These two different tax rates present a tempting opportunity: By applying deductions to the pool of money taxed at 35 percent, rather than the pool of money taxed at 15 percent, Romney can reduce his overall tax bill. The \$805,367 in deductions from his partnerships all receive exactly this useful treatment -- which may or may not be appropriate, depending on the nature of the expenses incurred.

"What's problematic is that these expenses are being deducted at the ordinary income tax rate of 35 percent, while the related income is mostly subject to the preferential long-term capital gain tax rate of 15 percent," Wilkins said.

Whether these expenses rightly apply to the pool of money taxed at 35 percent can only be determined by accessing the tax returns of Romney's Bain partnerships, which are not public documents. But many investment partnerships recognize stock losses that could not receive this favorable treatment.

In the years after Romney insists that he ended any active role at the firm, Bain Capital companies suffered huge job losses, plant closures and bankruptcies. KB Toys may be the saddest example. The New York Times has reported that after Bain bought the toy company in 2000, KB Toys filed for bankruptcy, laying off more than 3,000 workers. Bain's aggressive financial maneuvering, however, scored a 370 percent return on its investment.

Romney's own testimony and Securities and Exchange Commission filings demonstrate that he might not have been as hands off decision-making during those later years as he's suggested. Either way, his sophisticated tax practices show that he continued to benefit not only from Bain's profits but, at least in his tax bill, from Bain's losses.

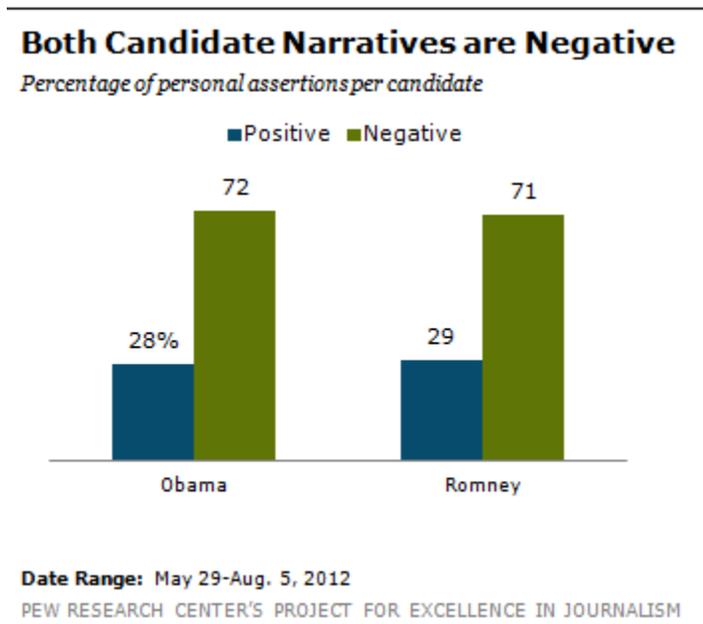
"Press Coverage of the Character of the Candidates Is Highly Negative, and Neither Obama nor Romney Has an Edge" by Journalism.org / Pew Research Center

Aug. 23, 2012, (http://www.journalism.org/analysis_report/2012_campaign_character_narratives)

On the eve of the conventions, the portrayal in the news media of the character and records of the two presidential contenders in 2012 has been as negative as any campaign in recent times, and neither candidate has enjoyed an advantage over the other, according to a new study of mainstream media coverage of the race for president.

More of what the public hears about candidates also now comes from the campaigns themselves and less from journalists acting as independent reporters or interpreters of who the candidates are.

An examination of the dominant or master narratives in the press about the character and record of presidential contenders finds that 72% of this coverage has been negative for Barack Obama and 71% has been negative for Mitt Romney. The study, conducted by the Pew Research Center's Project for Excellence in Journalism, examined the personal portrayal of the candidate in 50 major news outlets over a 10-week period.



These numbers make this as negative a campaign as PEJ has seen since it began monitoring the master narratives about candidates in press coverage in presidential campaigns in 2000. Only one campaign has been comparable-2004 when coverage was filled with the controversy over the war in Iraq, the prison scandal at Abu Ghraib and the Swift Boat documentaries. That year, 70% of the personal narrative studied about Democrat John Kerry and 75% of that about incumbent George Bush was negative, numbers similar to now.

Journalists themselves now play a smaller role in shaping these media narratives than they once did. Journalists are the source for about half as much of the statements about the candidates as was the case 12 years ago. The campaigns, by contrast, have come to play an ever larger role in shaping these narratives. The candidates and their partisan allies are the source for nearly a third more of the personal narrative about the candidates than in 2000.

On the eve of the nominating conventions, the discussion of President Obama in major mainstream news outlets is dominated by two narratives assessing his economic record-that his policies have failed to help the economy and that things would be much worse without his actions. Together these two narratives make up half of all the statements about Obama's record and character-and the negative side of the argument outweighs the positive in the coverage by more than two to one.

The next biggest personal narrative about Obama in the mainstream news media is one that raises doubts about whether the president really believes in American capitalism and ideas of individualism.

On the Republican side, the No. 1 personal narrative about Romney is that his experience in private equity suggests he is a "vulture" capitalist who doesn't care about workers, followed closely by the idea that he is an elitist out of touch with average Americans. The third-biggest personal narrative in the media about Romney is that he is a gaffe-prone, awkward campaigner.

Only some of these narratives, however, seem to be sticking with voters—at least so far. While much of the press narrative has suggested Obama has the wrong approach to fixing the economy, voters are split on whether to associate that notion with Obama or Romney. They are also divided on which candidate believes in American values (though Obama's ideals are questioned more often in the press). The two personal narrative themes that appear to be breaking through to voters are Romney's elitism and his awkwardness on the stump.

These are among the conclusions of a study that examined 1,772 assertions contained in more than 800 stories from major news outlets in radio, cable, network broadcast television, newspaper front pages and the most popular news websites in the country. The study of news coverage was twinned with a survey of public attitudes about the candidates by the Pew Research Center for the People & the Press.

In all, five of the six most prevalent master narratives in the press about Obama's character and biography were negative. And five of the six most prevalent themes about Romney were negative as well.

It is hard to know whether the findings reflect the highly polarized atmosphere of politics in 2012, changes in the ideology of the two parties, changes in the culture of the news media, or some combination of all these phenomena enabling and reinforcing one another. One conclusion, however, is unavoidable: Journalists to an increasing degree are ceding control of what the public learns in elections to partisan voices. Less of what we are hearing is coming from the press as an independent intermediary, filtering or assessing political rhetoric. And to that degree, the press is acting more as an enabler or conduit and less as an autonomous reportorial source.

Among the findings of the study:

- Obama's economic record dwarfs all other character issues in the campaign. Fully 36% of the master narrative themes about Obama in the press suggested that the president had failed to do enough to help the economy. That was more than twice the percentage of the counter argument—that the economy would be weaker had it not been for the administration's actions—which made up 16% of the assertions about Obama.
- The media narrative about Romney is more diffuse, but includes a number of sizable negative themes—more than for Obama. The largest—that he is a callous "vulture" capitalist—made up 14% of the assertions about Romney. The idea that he was a rich elitist was almost as large (13%). The idea that he was a weak, gaffe-prone campaigner was also substantial (11%). So was the idea that his policies would hurt the economy (10%).
- Journalists are a shrinking source in shaping the candidate narratives, while campaigns and partisans have assumed a much larger role in defining the press discourse. Reporters (and talk show personalities) account for about half as many of the assertions about the candidates' character and biography as they did 12 years ago—27% versus 50% in 2000. At the same time, campaigns, their surrogates and allies now account for nearly half of these themes, 48%, up from 37% in 2000. That shift, giving partisans a bigger role in shaping the media narrative, has been gradual and may reflect in part the shrinking reportorial resources in newsrooms.
- Campaigns have an even bigger voice in shaping the narrative online. On the 12 most prominent news websites in the country, campaigns and surrogates are behind 58% of statements studied about the record and character of the candidates—the highest of any medium. Outside experts have the smallest presence in the coverage online, making up just 2% of statements (versus 10% generally). The top political stories online tend to be breaking news, and this orientation may account for the larger role that partisans play

here in shaping the narrative. Candidates and their allies put a premium on rapid response to ensure that their messaging is available in the early accounts of any news.

- What is not being projected in the coverage is also striking—namely the positive arguments that the candidates want to convey. Just 3% of assertions about Obama, for instance, contain the idea that he cares about regular Americans—which PEJ has found is a major theme in his advertising and his digital messaging. For Romney, in turn, there were more assertions refuting one of his central campaign themes—that he has the experience to fix the economy (10%)—than there were affirming the idea (8%).
- Voter perceptions vary from the media narrative. When we surveyed these personal themes with voters, the strongest impression was that 52% thought Obama was a person of good moral character—though it represented just 1% of the coverage about him and 10% of his coverage suggested the opposite. The theme about Romney that resonated most with voters was that he was prone to gaffes. Nearly half of voters, 47% associate him with that.
- In cable television, Fox and MSNBC's coverage of the candidates' character themes are mirror images of each other. Fox has offered a mixed view of Romney, but its assessments of Obama's record and character have run negative by a ratio of six to one. The numbers are almost identical, in reverse, for MSNBC. Meanwhile, CNN has offered less about the campaign in general, but what it has, to a greater degree than its cable rivals, resembles what audiences would find in the rest of the media.

Candidate Narratives Mostly Negative

*Percentage of personal assertions
2000-2012*

	Positive	Negative
Mitt Romney	29%	71%
Barack Obama	28	72
John McCain	43	57
Barack Obama	69	31
George W. Bush	25	75
John Kerry	30	70
George W. Bush	48	52
Al Gore	20	80

PEW RESEARCH CENTER'S PROJECT
FOR EXCELLENCE IN JOURNALISM

In the four election cycles for which PEJ has conducted these studies, only two candidates have seen portrayals as negative as both Romney and Obama are seeing this year. One was Vice President Albert Gore Jr. in 2000. That year, fully 80% of the reporting of the major narrative themes about Gore portrayed negative messages about him. The largest was that he was tainted by the scandals of Bill Clinton and the second was that he was prone to lying. The other was George W. Bush in 2004, when 75% of the personal narrative studied was negative, led by the idea that he was arrogant followed by the idea that he lacked credibility.

The negative portrayal of Obama and Romney in the press also finds some correlation in the way that the public views the candidates this year. Data from the Pew Research Center for the People & the Press and Gallup find that both of these candidates are viewed less favorably by the public—50% for Obama and 37% for Romney—than any Democratic or Republican nominees have been since 1992.

Four years ago at this point, both Obama and the Republican candidate, Senator John McCain, had favorability ratings in the low 60s. The last candidate to have a favorability rating comparable to either candidate this year was George W. Bush in 2004, at 51%, numbers similar to Obama's this year. The portrayal in the press about the candidates was also similar.

What cannot be determined is cause and effect. To what extent is the media portrayal of the candidates helping make the public view of the candidates this year more negative? Or are negative public perceptions driving the press coverage?

The study is not an analysis of media bias; rather, as it has for four campaign cycles, PEJ is examining what the public is hearing and reading from all sources in the mainstream media—from the campaigns, journalists, outside analysts and others.

PEJ began to produce this series of studies analyzing the coverage of the candidates' character and record to probe two major ideas about press coverage of presidential elections. One is that for all the reporting about tactics and strategy, campaign performance (the horse race), or even policy, in the end, character is central to how voters will choose. These studies are a way to isolate those messages about character and record and examine them in detail.

The second purpose is to test the theory that the election reporting is heavily influenced by a handful of master narratives, or what some scholars have called "meta-narratives," about the candidates. While every campaign is an ongoing story, the theory argues that journalists' choice of facts and incidents is influenced by certain perceived character traits or themes about the candidates. And one concern about these master narratives is that they become self-perpetuating. Facts and anecdotes that illustrate ongoing storylines become magnified, critics worry, and events that do not fit with those running storylines get overlooked.

Over the years these studies have tested the meta-narrative theory, explored how widespread certain narratives are about different candidates, how those themes have ebbed and flowed over the course of races, and examined the success of candidates in refuting negative assertions about themselves or projecting positive ones.

In 2000, for instance, we found that the idea that George Bush was unintelligent was a major theme, though it had largely disappeared in 2004, replaced by the idea that he was arrogant. The idea that Al Gore was a liar stood out as a major theme in coverage in 2000, to the point that there were moments when the press misquoted him because they thought he had begun to exaggerate again. In 2008, the idea that John McCain was not a true conservative dominated coverage about him, whereas for Obama it was that he offered the promise of a new kind of politics, a theme that is now largely absent in 2012.

To execute the studies, researchers draw up a list of character themes that they have seen in the coverage, creating an equal number of positive and negative themes. They then test a sample of stories to refine the list, add new themes and drop others, to identify which themes are indeed most common or obvious themes that campaigns are trying to project that are absent. Then a larger sample of reporting is examined to measure the presence of these themes across a broader swath of coverage.

20120824-02	07:24	MarthaH	"Who Are the Kochs & How Far Does Their Influence Reach?" & "Koch Brothers' Non-Profit Hits the Ground in Swing States"
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Kochs, 2 articles to inform!

"Who Are the Kochs and How Far Does Their Influence Reach?" by Fredreka Schouten, *USA Today*

Aug. 23, 2012, (<http://www.usatoday.com/news/politics/story/2012-08-23/koch-brothers-profile/57255068/1?csp=34news>)

(WASHINGTON) Charles and David Koch each have nearly 10 times the money amassed by TV superstar Oprah Winfrey, but none of her fame.

This election could change that — as the conservative mega-donors ramp up their political activity, and liberal groups set out to target them as greedy oil billionaires, seeking to influence the election to help their bottom line.

The brothers, who have a combined net worth that Forbes pegs at \$50 billion, control Kansas-based Koch Industries. It operates oil refineries, makes chemicals and asphalt, controls pipelines and owns a wide range of consumer products, including Stainmaster carpet and Angel Soft toilet paper.

Charles Koch, 76, serves as chairman and CEO of the company, an outgrowth of an oil-refining business begun by their father, Fred Koch. David Koch, 72, is executive vice president.

"My joke is that we're the biggest company you've never heard of," David Koch said in a 2008 interview with Portfolio.com.

David Koch, a prostate cancer survivor, has emerged as a leading arts- and cancer-research philanthropist in New York, where he lives. In 2008, he grabbed headlines with a \$100 million donation to Lincoln Center for the renovation of the State Theater of New York, which now bears his name. This year, he donated \$35 million for a new dinosaur hall at the Smithsonian's Museum of Natural History. In all, he has pledged or contributed \$750 million to charity.

In Washington, however, the brothers are best known for their growing influence in politics as they inject millions into an array of conservative groups, including Americans for Prosperity.

"They believe that economic freedom is essential for improving society as a whole," Robert Tappan, a Koch Industries spokesman, said in an e-mail.

In Congress, Republicans on the House Energy and Commerce Committee have been the top recipients of Koch-related contributions for the past two election cycles, data compiled by the non-profit Center for Responsive Politics show.

The company spent \$20 million in federal lobbying in 2008, up from \$610,000 five years earlier — as lawmakers worked on a proposal to slash greenhouse-gas emissions. In 2008 Senate filings, company officials said they would lobby to "oppose restraints on production and use of energy" in the measure. The bill never became law.

Two years later, a Koch subsidiary, Flint Hills Resources, spent \$1 million to support an unsuccessful ballot initiative to suspend a California law, mandating significant reductions in greenhouse-gas emissions in the state.

In the first six months of this year, the company has spent \$5.4 million to influence Washington policy, ranking among the top five oil companies in lobbying expenses, according to the non-profit Center for Responsive Politics. The company has sought to shape nearly five dozen bills, including one pushed by Democrats to repeal oil-industry subsidies.

"They are trying to influence the election to maintain taxpayer subsidies for their oil companies," Obama campaign spokesman Ben LaBolt said last week. "Ultimately, the American people will reject their arguments once their motives are clear."

Tappan denies that. The company has "consistently opposed subsidies over the years, even if it benefits us," he said.

Obama's allies "have attacked Charles Koch and David Koch, who are private citizens, because of their exercise of their constitutional right to speak out about issues of public policy," Tappan said. "These attacks confuse honest disagreement over policies with the politics of personal destruction. This is troubling and should be very concerning to all Americans."

The battle over the Kochs' role in politics will grow only more intense in the weeks ahead.

This week, a liberal non-profit, Patriot Majority, launched what it said will be a multimillion-dollar campaign targeting the Kochs over what the group called the brothers' "greed agenda."

The first phase was a \$500,000 cable television ad buy that charges the Kochs and their "special-interest friends" will spend \$400 million to "buy this year's elections and advance their agenda."

Another Koch official, Phillip Ellender, issued a statement calling the ads an "attempt to shut down free speech."

Foster Friess, a multimillionaire Wyoming investor and Republican donor who has grown to know both Kochs in recent years, said he tires of portrayals of them as the dark villains of the conservative movement.

"They are nice, decent people," told *USA Today* recently. "They are absolutely national treasures and have a huge respect for what makes this country great — free enterprise."

Friess, who donated more than \$2 million in this election cycle to a super PAC aiding Rick Santorum's presidential campaign, said he is among Americans for Prosperity's donors, but declined to say how much he has given.

"I probably want to keep that private," he said. "But it was a meaningful amount for me."

"Koch Brothers' Non-Profit Hits the Ground in Swing States" by Fredreka Schouten, *USA Today*

Aug. 23, 2012, (<http://www.usatoday.com/news/politics/story/2012-08-23/koch-brothers-election-north-carolina/57254832/1>)

(GARNER, NC) Clutching Samsung tablets filled with interactive maps, eight conservative activists gathered in a Food Lion parking lot here on a sweltering summer afternoon to get their marching orders.

Knock on doors in this Raleigh suburb and identify residents opposed to President Obama's health care law and his stewardship of the economy — all part of an ambitious voter-outreach campaign by Americans for Prosperity, a non-profit backed by billionaire brothers Charles and David Koch that is emerging as one of biggest outside forces of the 2012 election.

The Kochs, who own an oil, chemical and textile conglomerate that *Forbes* magazine pegs as the nation's second-largest private company, have become the country's leading figures of libertarian activism. The Koch duo (pronounced "coke") has injected millions into an array of foundations, think tanks and political groups to spread their small-government, anti-regulation philosophy, which their critics argue matches their economic interests.

Obama targeted them in the first TV ad of his re-election campaign as "secretive oil billionaires." And Hollywood has joined in: A new comedy, "The Campaign", features the fictional Motch brothers, business titans who try to rig the election to advance their corporate agenda.

"It's almost like Kochs have created an alternative to the Republican Party that pushes their brand of conservatism — an economy with less regulation and one in which the government intervenes far less than it does now," said Bill Allison of the non-partisan Sunlight Foundation, which tracks political money. "I don't think we've seen anything like this before, and a lot of it is under the radar."

Americans for Prosperity (AFP) has been at the forefront of the libertarian attacks on Obama, blistering him with \$25 million worth of commercials this month. The first round focused on the nation's rising debt and call for Obama's ouster. AFP officials stress, however, that their goal isn't to elect Democrats or Republicans but to educate voters on the candidates' positions and build a cadre of activists willing to hold elected officials accountable after Election Day.

The group is well on its way to amassing more than \$100 million this year, AFP President Tim Phillips said, but he notes that less than half of the money will be spent on ads. Instead, most of the activity will happen far from the spotlight as the group taps an army of 2.1 million activists to reach voters in swing states such as North Carolina, which Obama won by 14,177 votes in 2008 and where he will be renominated for the presidency next month at the Democratic National Convention in Charlotte.

AFP's goal: to reach about 8.5 million voters in more than a dozen battleground states. The group's ramped-up activity highlights the ways independent political groups of all stripes and political allegiances — often funded by a handful of wealthy donors — are racing to shape national policy. And it points to an aggressive expansion by Republican independent groups into voter-mobilization efforts that were once the province of candidates and the parties.

Know the voter

AFP's voter-canvassing is a precise operation — distilling information culled from a massive voter data warehouse, also created with the Kochs' financial backing. Conservatives say they took their cue from Democratic-aligned groups, who used a vast voter databank funded with help from billionaire financier George Soros to identify and turn out voters in 2004 and again in 2008.

The conservatives' data-gathering operation, called Themis for the Greek goddess of divine order, amasses information on millions of Americans and allows political strategists with AFP and other like-minded groups to pinpoint potential supporters and bombard them in person, via the phone and Internet with personalized messages.

"Our geo-targeting looks at everything from voting data to Census data to consumer-purchasing information," Phillips said. "We know their magazine subscriptions. In some cases, we know the websites they prefer to surf."

Launched in 2003, AFP and its sister organization, the Americans for Prosperity Foundation, have grown in size and influence, now employing 200 people in 31 states.

AFP helped organize some of the raucous protests at 2009 congressional town-hall-style meetings to oppose Obama's health care plan and rallied its supporters in recent years to oppose Democratic-backed legislation that would have created a cap-and-trade system to reduce greenhouse-gas emissions. On that day in late June when the Supreme Court upheld the 2010 health care law as constitutional, the group immediately announced a \$9 million ad campaign in 12 presidential swing states to slam the law as one of the "largest tax increases in history."

Little is publicly known about the precise sources of its funding. Americans for Prosperity and its foundation reported combined revenue of nearly \$39.6 million in 2010, according to the groups' tax returns. David Koch is the foundation's president.

Americans for Prosperity is a non-profit "social welfare" organization that can take unlimited money, but does not have to publicly disclose the sources of its money. (That's in contrast to super PACs — committees that can raise and spend unlimited amounts, but must disclose contributors.)

Phillips declined to reveal funders, saying such disclosure would have a "chilling effect" on donors.

Tar Heel State opening

North Carolina — one of nine states won by President George W. Bush in 2004 that shifted to Obama four years later — is home to one of AFP's busiest state chapters with nearly 140,000 activists.

Obama, too, has a robust activist network in the state, where he became the first Democrat to carry North Carolina since Jimmy Carter's victory in 1976. His campaign has opened more than 40 offices here and installed hundreds of voter-registration boxes in barbershops and beauty salons.

But Obama's narrow win in 2008 came against a Republican ticket so cash-strapped that "it was virtually impossible for anyone here to get a McCain-Palin yard sign," said Dee Stewart, a GOP strategist in Raleigh.

The picture is markedly different this year. Republican presumptive nominee Mitt Romney and the Republican Party out-raised Obama and Democrats in July — the third month in a row — and Romney has opened 20 offices in the state. Further adding to Democrats' worries: Jobs figures released last week show unemployment in the state climbed to 9.6% in July, topping the 8.3% rate for the nation.

Dallas Woodhouse, AFP's North Carolina director, said he believes support for Obama has waned in the white, working-class suburbs that sided with him four years ago. "They are contending with high food prices, big gasoline bills," he said, "and their young adult children with college degrees are stuck at home with Mom, flipping burgers for a living."

Finding those who 'disapprove'

Back in Garner on a recent Tuesday evening, the small band of Americans for Prosperity volunteers takes to the streets to find some of those voters.

At one stop, George Hansen, 74, tells 30-year-old volunteer Amy Bryson that he's deeply worried about the economy. Hansen's adult daughter works at a pet store and struggles with her mortgage, but she can't find a better-paying job, he said. He voted for Obama but isn't sure whom he will support in November.

A few blocks away, volunteer Peter Morley, 69, reads his survey questions to Recia Long as she sits on her front porch, smoking a cigarette. Obama's economic policies have had no impact, she responds. How does she feel about the 2010 health care law? "Disapprove," the 63-year-old retiree answers.

With a few touches on the tablet's screen, Morley logs her responses. She's a likely target for follow-up communication.

Josette Chmeil, 44, relishes her role with AFP. The energetic ex-New Yorker who now runs her own business as a professional organizer in Durham, N.C., said she is appalled by what she views as government intrusion into personal matters.

"New York is now a nanny state that's governing the size of soft drink you can buy," she says, referring to Mayor Michael Bloomberg's drive to ban the sale of super-size sugary drinks. "It wasn't like that 20 years ago."

She's one of AFP's most active Raleigh-area volunteers, devoting as many as seven hours a week. During the canvassing, she strides quickly up concrete driveways despite 90-degree heat and swarming gnats. Most of her assigned residents decline to take the survey.

"It's not frustrating," she says later. "If I knock on 20 doors and have one person I can have a dialogue with and change their perception, that's success."

Koch affiliations

A sampling of the billionaire brothers' major grant recipients:

1. Koch Industries (divisions)
 - Flint Hills Resources
 - Koch Minerals
 - Koch Pipeline Co.
 - Koch Supply & Trading
 - Koch Chemical Technology Group
- INVISTA
 - Georgia-Pacific
 - The Matador Cattle Co.
2. David H. Koch Charitable Foundation (major grant recipients in 2010)
 - Ballet Theatre Foundation
 - City Center of Music & Drama
3. Charles G. Koch Charitable Foundation (major grant recipients in 2010)
 - Arts & Sciences Foundation
 - Bill of Rights Institute
 - Foundation for Individual Rights in Education
 - George Mason University Foundation

- Institute for Humane Studies
 - Jack Miller Center
 - Market-Based Management Institute
4. Claude R. Lambe Charitable Foundation (major grant recipients in 2010)
 - American Council for Capital Formation
 - American Legislative Exchange Council
 - Americans for Prosperity Foundation
 - The Federalist Society
 - The Heritage Foundation
 - Independent Women's Forum
 - Manhattan Institute for Policy Research
 - Washington Legal Foundation
 5. Americans for Prosperity
 6. Cato Institute

Sources: Federal tax records, Koch Industries website, USA TODAY research

20120824-03	9:05	Pam	Re: "Texas Democrats: Judge Who Said Obama Could Trigger Civil War Should Quit" (reply to MarthaH, FotM Newsletter #211)
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I love it too!! You, Martha, are so right--about everything. :-) I agree that education is vital, and the conservatives do too, which is why they try so hard to privatize education and control curriculum. The battle for the schools is really a battle for the minds of the young. Having taught at a university in the South, I can attest to the stubborn ignorance of many of our students. Evolution, naturally, is the biggie.

I'm sure folks despaired during the Civil War and the World Wars. What would the world be today if Hitler had prevailed? There are turning points in history, when a different direction was possible--the defeat of the Spanish Armada, the failure of the bomb to kill Hitler. I think we're at one now. I love Woody Allen's "Advice to the Graduates." It's worth looking up. :-)

(I'm dying to know if I'd recognize the name of the Greencastlite you describe.)

20120824-04	10:04	SteveG	Fw: CREDO Action Petition: Rape Is Rape! Censure Todd Akin!
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from CREDO Action:

Todd Akin — the Missouri Congressman who launched an outrageous attack on women by claiming survivors of "legitimate rape" have biological defenses against pregnancy — is refusing to step down despite calls for his resignation from prominent members of his own party.

Not only were his remarks ignorant, dangerous and offensive, they were also unbecoming of a member of Congress. That's why Congress must take action and censure him immediately — the most severe form of punishment in the House short of expulsion.

Tell members of Congress who voted to redefine rape: Censure Todd Akin.

Suggesting that women who become pregnant as a result of rape are not "legitimately raped," is outrageous and shows an utter lack of understanding of the basic principles of human biology.

And this is not simply an isolated comment by a dangerously ignorant politician, or the first time right-wing extremists in the House have tried to "redefine" rape — in 2011, 250 members of Congress joined Rep. Akin in a vote to redefine rape. The purpose of that bill was to limit the number of survivors of rape and incest who could receive federally funded abortion care under existing law by changing the definition of rape to "forcible rape." We fought back successfully then, and we need to do the same now.

With censure, we have an opportunity to get extremist and anti-woman members of Congress who have worked in the past to redefine rape, on the record once again. We need to know who stands with women and admits that, as the president declared, "Rape is rape."

Rep. Akin's utterly offensive remarks are part of a pattern of attacks led by Tea Party Republicans against women in this country. We have to push back, and we have to push back hard not just against Rep. Akin but against any member of the House who participates in rhetorical attacks on women by trying to redefine rape as "forcible" or "legitimate."

With many members of the House already going on record to denounce Rep. Akin's statement we have a unique opportunity to push legislators to go a step further and support a censure resolution.

We will not let Congress redefine rape. We will not let right-wing extremists continue their attacks on women's health. We must not let our momentum slow at this crucial moment. Click below to sign the petition:

http://act.credoaction.com/campaign/censure_akin/?utm_expid=16130742-0.

Thank you for standing up for women. —Becky Bond, Political Director

20120826-05	07:10	SteveB	Fw: Avaaz Petition: Free Pussy Riot, Free Russia!
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from Avaaz:

Facing 2 years in jail for singing a song criticizing President Putin in a church, a member of Pussy Riot gestured to the court and said in her show-trial's closing statements, "Despite the fact that we are physically here, we are freer than everyone sitting across from us ... We can say anything we want..."

Russia is steadily slipping into the grip of a new autocracy -- clamping down on public protest, allegedly rigging elections, intimidating media, banning gay rights parades for 100 years, and even beating critics like chess master Garry Kasparov. But many Russian citizens remain defiant, and Pussy Riot's eloquent bravery has galvanized the world's solidarity. Now, our best chance to prove to Putin there is a price to pay for this repression lies with Europe.

The European Parliament is calling for an assets freeze and travel ban on Putin's powerful inner circle who are accused of multiple crimes. Our community is spread across every corner of the world -- if we can push the Europeans to act, it will not only hit Putin's circle hard, as many bank and have homes in Europe, but also counter his anti-Western propaganda, showing him that the whole world is willing to stand up for a free Russia. Click below to support the sanctions and tell everyone.

Last week's trial is about far more than three women and their 40-second 'punk prayer'. When tens of thousands flooded the streets to protest rigged elections, the government threw organisers into jail for weeks. And in June Parliament effectively outlawed dissent by raising the fine for unsanctioned protest an astounding 150-fold, roughly the average Russian's salary for a whole year.

Pussy Riot may be the most famous Russian activists right now, but their sentence is not the grossest injustice of Putin's war on dissent. In 2009, anti-corruption lawyer Sergei Magnitsky, who uncovered a massive tax fraud at the heart of Russia's power dealers, died in jail -- without a trial, on shaky charges, and with medical attention repeatedly denied. 60 of Russia's elite have been under scrutiny for the case and its cover-up, and the sanctions the European Parliament is proposing are on this inner circle.

International attention to Russia's crackdown is cresting right now, and the 'Magnitsky sanctions' are the best way to put the heat on Putin and help create breathing room for the suffocating democracy movement. Let's give Europe's leaders a global public mandate to adopt the sanctions. Sign the petition now and share this with everyone:

http://www.avaaz.org/en/free_pussy_riot_free_russia_a/.

What happens in Russia matters to us all. Russia has blocked international coordination on Syria and other urgent global issues, and a Russian autocracy threatens the world we all want, wherever we are. The Russian people face a serious challenge, but we know that people-powered movements are the best cure for corruption and iron-fisted governments -- and that international solidarity can help keep the flame of these movements alive. Let's join together now to show Putin that the world will hold him to account and push for change until Russia is set free.

With hope, Luis, David, Alice, Ricken, Lisa, Vilde, and the Avaaz team

More information:

Pussy Riot sentenced to 2 years in jail for stunt against Putin, <http://world.time.com/2012/08/17/protests-verdict-loom-for-russias-jailed-punks/>.

Russia faces angry response to jailing of Pussy Riot members (*Irish Times*), <http://www.irishtimes.com/newspaper/frontpage/2012/0818/1224322386243.html>.

Media Frenzy Over Pussy Riot Obscures Legal Plights Of Lesser-Known Protesters (Radio Free Europe), <http://www.rferl.org/content/russia-antigovernment-protesters-jail-time-pussy-riot/24677862.html>.

Moscow election official: I helped rig Russia vote (NBC News), <http://worldnews.nbcnews.com/news/2011/12/06/9255664-moscow-election-official-i-helped-rig-russia-vote?lite>.

As US acts on Magnitsky, Europe debates (*The Moscow Times*), <http://www.themoscowtimes.com/news/article/as-us-acts-on-magnitsky-europe-debates/463107.html>.

Received this today. How do you respond to this type of thinking?

[Source of original email unknown, but both batches of insane, rabid, lying complaints by Mr. Pritchett appear to be genuine, if misguided. –SteveB]

WAKE UP, AMERICA!!!

Hit the nail perfectly. Lou Pritchett Update. Read this and weep...

Lou Pritchett is one of corporate America's true living legends -- a former P & G executive, an acclaimed author, a dynamic teacher, and one of the world's most highly rated speakers. It was he who changed the way America does business by creating an audacious concept that came to be known as "Partnering".

Here is part of a speech given by Lou Pritchett, Apr. 15, 2012:

I was born in "year two" of the Great Depression (1931) and spent the first 10 years of my life influenced by the extreme hardships of the Depression. By today's standards my family was about a mile below today's so called 'poverty level'; but if you never 'had' -- doing without was not so 'bad'. Borrowing shoes to graduate from the 8th grade didn't seem at all demeaning because most of the 8th graders did the same thing.

In June 1944, my only brother, Joe, was killed in action on Utah Beach in Normandy, France during the D-Day landings. Exactly one year later, my father died and left me, my mother, and my sister to go it alone. And alone we went. My mother went to work at a department store, my sister dropped out of school and joined her and I went to work shining shoes on the streets of Memphis for a dime a shine. Government assistance was not available and if it were I am confident my mother would have refused it because she never wanted the government involved in our lives.

I mention this bit of personal history to help you understand that Millions of Americans, including your parents and grandparents, grew up like me during the Great Depression and never expected nor wanted the government to offer them anything other than an opportunity.... and now; to see what Obama is trying to do to our country tends to make you crazy.

As some of you know, my "Scare Me" letter went viral with millions of hits on the Internet during the past 3 years. I have now written a follow-up letter, which I will now share with you. It will be released to the press tomorrow morning:

In April 2009, I sent President Obama and the *New York Times* a Letter titled "You Scare Me" because, as a candidate, he promised to "fundamentally transform America." Now, after observing his performance for over three years, he no longer scares me--- he terrifies me for the following reasons:

1. He has done more to damage America's standing in the world, to lower the standard of living in America, to impoverish future generations and to shake our faith in the country's future than any other American president in history.
2. With a compliant Democrat congress, a lapdog media, and a weak, almost nonexistent Republican opposition; he has shattered the America's dream of job security, home ownership and rugged individualism for millions of Americans and has poisoned and divided our civil society with his politics of envy, class warfare, race warfare, and religious warfare which he is using as fundamental building blocks for his socialist agenda.
3. Culturally, he remains totally out of touch with traditional American values. This has absolutely nothing to do with race or where he was born, rather it has everything to do with where, how and with whom he was raised, schooled, educated, trained and associates with still today.

4. He has surrounded himself with naive academicians, lawyers, politicians, bureaucrats and socialist leaning czars who arrogantly think and behave exactly as he does. People who offer no balanced suggestions or devil's advocate positions.... think in lock step with him that big government is the answer to all our problems.

[These would be all the Bush people, perhaps? –SteveB]

5. He not only encourages but aids and abets the unionization of all American industry.... the albatross around the neck of the free market. In turn, they provide the money and muscle to intimidate his opponents.

[Fascist! –SteveB]

6. He has increased the national debt by over 30% in just Three years. If re-elected and this rate of increase continues, America will be burdened with an unsustainable 20 trillion dollar debt which will result in the Country's financial death. Recovery will be impossible ---- America will be the Greece of 2016.

7. Given his fanatical beholding to the environmental and man-caused global warming fringe, he has deliberately discouraged U.S. fossil fuel exploration and production while wasting millions of tax payer dollars on solar, wind and algae experiments. He refuses to accept that oil, gas and coal are not America's enemies, they are America's assets which, properly managed, could make us energy independent within a generation.

8. He views the U.S. as a power in retreat which abused its World dominance. Therefore he systematically apologizes round the world. Last March he whispered to Russian President Medvedev "--this is my last election. After my election, I have more flexibility". Just what is the secret that Obama and Putin are concealing from the American people until after the election? With what other leaders has he made similar secret agreements?

9. Finally, after all his missteps, bad decision making, poor management, and zero leadership, the fact that he has the audacity to seek re-election should terrify every American.

I predict that if re-elected, future historians and political interpreters will look back at the eight year period 2008-2016, and conclude "the 44th President of the U.S. allowed the takers to overpower the payers which resulted in the greatest economy in history vanishing from the face of the Earth.

Farewell America, the World will really miss you!

Lou Pritchett April 15, 2012

Lou Pritchett's Open Letter to President Obama (May 14, 2009)

The author, Lou Pritchett, is a well-known public speaker who retired after a successful 36-year career as the VP World Sales for Proctor and Gamble.

Lou Pritchett is one of corporate America's true living legends - an acclaimed author, dynamic teacher and one of the world's highest rated speakers. Successful corporate executives everywhere recognize him as the foremost leader in change management. Lou changed the way America does business by creating an audacious concept that came to be known as "partnering." Pritchett rose from soap salesman to Vice-President, Sales and Customer Development for Proctor and Gamble and over the course of 36 years, made corporate history.

AN OPEN LETTER TO PRESIDENT OBAMA

Dear President Obama:

You are the thirteenth President under whom I have lived and unlike any of the others, you truly scare me.

You scare me because after months of exposure, I know nothing about you.

You scare me because I do not know how you paid for your expensive Ivy League education and your upscale lifestyle and housing with no visible signs of support.

You scare me because you did not spend the formative years of youth growing up in America and culturally you are not an American.

You scare me because you have never run a company or met a payroll.

You scare me because you have never had military experience, thus don't understand it at its core.

You scare me because you lack humility and 'class', always blaming others.

You scare me because for over half your life you have aligned yourself with radical extremists who hate America and you refuse to publicly denounce these radicals who wish to see America fail.

You scare me because you are a cheerleader for the 'blame America' crowd and deliver this message abroad.

You scare me because you want to change America to a European style country where the government sector dominates instead of the private sector.

You scare me because you want to replace our health care system with a government controlled one.

You scare me because you prefer 'wind mills' to responsibly capitalizing on our own vast oil, coal and shale reserves.

You scare me because you want to kill the American capitalist goose that lays the golden egg which provides the highest standard of living in the world.

You scare me because you have begun to use 'extortion' tactics against certain banks and corporations.

You scare me because your own political party shrinks from challenging you on your wild and irresponsible spending proposals.

You scare me because you will not openly listen to or even consider opposing points of view from intelligent people.

You scare me because you falsely believe that you are both omnipotent and omniscient.

You scare me because the media gives you a free pass on everything you do.

You scare me because you demonize and want to silence the Limbaughs, Hannitys, O'Relllys and Becks who offer opposing, conservative points of view.

You scare me because you prefer controlling over governing.

Finally, you scare me because if you serve a second term I will probably not feel safe in writing a similar letter in 8 years.

—Lou Pritchett

The dude is not in the same world as you and me. And I think anyone who could string these words together must also know they are blatant lies. Surely...

20120824-06	11:19	SteveB	Video: Robert Reich Explains The Romney-Ryan Economic Plan
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This shows why Robert Reich is such a great professor! Excellent! I would sure love to see R0mney or Ryan respond and debate! Fat chance!

Video (Aug. 20, 2012): http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=cO1F7EcGFAC.

20120824-07	13:26	Pam	"Washington & Wall Street: The Revolving Door"
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"Washington and Wall Street: The Revolving Door" by Robert B. Reich, *NYT Sunday Book Review*

May 27, 2011, (http://www.nytimes.com/2011/05/29/books/review/book-review-reckless-endangerment-by-gretchen-morgenson-and-joshua-rosner.html?_r=1&emc=eta1&pagewanted=all)

(*Reckless Endangerment*, by Gretchen Morgenson and Joshua Rosner, Times Books/Henry Holt & Company)

It's hardly news that the near meltdown of America's financial system enriched a few at the expense of the rest of us. Who's responsible? The recent report of the Financial Crisis Inquiry Commission blamed all the usual suspects — Wall Street banks, financial regulators, the mortgage giants Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac, and subprime lenders — which is tantamount to blaming no one. *Reckless Endangerment* concentrates on particular individuals who played key roles.

The authors, Gretchen Morgenson, a Pulitzer Prize-winning business reporter and columnist at *The New York Times*, and Joshua Rosner, an expert on housing finance, deftly trace the beginnings of the collapse to the mid-1990s, when the Clinton administration called for a partnership between the private sector and Fannie and Freddie to encourage home buying. The mortgage agencies' government backing was, in effect, a valuable subsidy, which was used by Fannie's C.E.O., James A. Johnson, to increase home ownership while enriching himself and other executives. A 1996 study by the Congressional Budget Office found that Fannie pocketed about a third of the subsidy rather than passing it on to homeowners. Over his nine years heading Fannie, Johnson personally took home roughly \$100 million. His successor, Franklin D. Raines, was treated no less lavishly.

To entrench Fannie's privileged position, Morgenson and Rosner write, Johnson and Raines channeled some of the profits to members of Congress — contributing to campaigns and handing out patronage positions to relatives and former staff members. Fannie paid academics to do research showing the benefits of its activities and playing down the risks, and shrewdly organized bankers, real estate brokers and housing advocacy groups to lobby on its behalf. Essentially, taxpayers were unknowingly handing Fannie billions of dollars a year to finance a campaign of self-promotion and self-protection. Morgenson and Rosner offer telling details, as when they describe how Lawrence Summers, then a deputy Treasury secretary, buried a department report recommending that Fannie and Freddie be privatized. A few years later, according to Morgenson and Rosner, Fannie hired Kenneth Starr, the former solicitor general and Whitewater investigator, who intimidated a member of Congress who had the temerity to ask how much the company was paying its top executives.

All this gave Fannie's executives free rein to underwrite far more loans, further enriching themselves and their shareholders, but at increasing risk to taxpayers as lending standards declined. A company called Countrywide Financial became Fannie's single largest provider of home loans and the nation's largest mortgage lender. Countrywide abandoned standards altogether, even doctoring loans to make applicants look creditworthy, while generating a fortune for its co-founder, Angelo R. Mozilo. Meanwhile, Wall Street banks received fat fees underwriting securities issued by Fannie and Freddie, and even more money providing lenders like Countrywide with lines of credit to expand their risky lending and then bundling the mortgages into securities they peddled to their clients. The Street, Morgenson and Rosner say, knew lending standards were declining but maintained the charade

because it was so profitable. Goldman Sachs even used its own money to bet against the bundles — making huge profits off the losses of its clients on the very securities it had marketed to them. Eventually, of course, everything came crashing down.

The authors are at their best demonstrating how the revolving door between Wall Street and Washington facilitated the charade. As Treasury secretary, Robert Rubin, formerly the head of Goldman Sachs, pushed for repeal of the -Depression-era Glass-Steagall Act that had separated commercial from investment banking — a move that Sanford Weill, the chief executive of Travelers Group had long sought so that Travelers could merge with -Citibank. After leaving the Treasury, Rubin became Citigroup's vice chairman, and "over the following decade pocketed more than \$100,000,000 as the bank sank deeper and deeper into a risky morass of its own design." With Rubin's protégé Timothy F. Geithner as its head, the New York Federal Reserve Bank reduced its oversight of Wall Street.

A tight web of personal relationships connected Fannie, Goldman Sachs, Citigroup, the New York Fed, the Federal Reserve and the Treasury. In 1996, Fannie added Stephen Friedman, the former chairman of Goldman Sachs, to its board. In 1999, Johnson joined Goldman's board. That same year Henry M. Paulson Jr. became the head of Goldman and was in charge when the firm created many of its most disastrous securities — while Geithner's New York Fed looked the other way. As the Treasury secretary under George W. Bush, Paulson would oversee the taxpayer bailout of Fannie Mae, Freddie Mac, Goldman, Citigroup, other banks and the giant insurer American International Group (A.I.G), on which Goldman had relied. As head of the New York Fed, and then as the Treasury secretary, Geithner would also oversee the bailout.

Morgenson and Rosner are irked that their key players got away with it. American taxpayers have so far shelled out \$153 billion to keep Fannie and Freddie afloat and are still owed tens of billions from bailing out other financial institutions. Yet today James Johnson is a rich and respected member of Washington's political establishment (although he was forced to resign from President-elect Obama's advisory team after the press got wind of his cut-rate personal loans from Countrywide). Franklin Raines retired from Fannie with a generous bonus. Henry Paulson became a fellow at Johns Hopkins. Robert Rubin is affiliated with the Brookings Institution. Timothy Geithner remains Treasury secretary.

"The failure to hold central figures accountable for their actions sets a dangerous precedent," the authors say. "A system where perpetrators of such a crime are allowed to slip quietly from the scene is just plain wrong." True up to a point — but Morgenson and Rosner don't show that any actual crimes were committed. Their major characters surely exhibited outsize ambition and greed, but these qualities are not exactly rare in modern capitalism. Curiously absent from their book are some other prominent people who have been suspected of perpetrating fraud, like Richard S. Fuld Jr., who ran Lehman Brothers into the ground, and Joseph J. Cassano, the former head of the financial products unit at A.I.G.

The real problem, which the authors only hint at, is that Washington and the financial sector have become so tightly intertwined that public accountability has all but vanished. The revolving door described in *Reckless Endangerment* is but one symptom. The extraordinary wealth of America's financial class also elicits boundless cooperation from politicians who depend on it for campaign contributions and from a fawning business press, as well as a stream of honors from universities, prestigious charities and think tanks eager to reward their generosity. In this symbiotic world, conflicts of interest are easily hidden, appearances of conflicts taken for granted and abuses of public trust for personal gain readily dismissed.

All told, the nation appears to have learned remarkably little from the near meltdown. Fannie and Freddie, now wards of the state, currently back more than half of all new mortgages, and their executives are still pocketing fortunes. Wall Street's biggest banks are a fifth larger than they were when they got into trouble, and the pay packages of their top guns as generous. Although the rest of America has paid dearly, we seem more recklessly endangered than ever.

20120824-08	13:55	SteveG	"GOP Official Says God Chooses to Bless Raped Women with Pregnancy"
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"GOP Official Says God Chooses to Bless Raped Women with Pregnancy" by Lou Colagiovanni, Examiner.com

Aug. 21, 2012, (<http://www.examiner.com/article/gop-official-says-god-chooses-to-bless-raped-women-with-pregnancy>)

The state of Missouri has been in the national spotlight recently because of comments made by Republican Congressman Todd Akin who claimed that raped women rarely get pregnant. After his statements hit the Internet, immediate outrage burned across the country. Akin later apologized, but his statements have rekindled a nationwide debate. One that republicans desperately do not want to have, lest they alienate a wide majority of female voters.

Sharon Barnes, a high ranking state Republican, came to the defense of her conservative colleague who she believes only "phrased it (his statement) badly."

Barnes was quoted by *The New York Times* saying, "abortion is never an option." Barnes went on to biblically claim that, "If God has chosen to bless this person [the rape victim] with a life, you don't kill it."

Barnes did not elaborate on her views for post-pregnancy care, or costs.

Barnes has been a figure in conservative St. Louis politics for years, and currently holds all of the following titles according to her LinkedIn profile:

1. President of The 2nd Congressional District Republican Women
2. President of The Republican Women's Club of St. Louis
3. Vice President, Membership Committee at National Federation Of Republican Women
4. Vice President of The Missouri Federation of Republican Women
5. Chairman of The St. Louis City Republican Central Committee
6. State Committeewoman, 4th Senate District at Missouri Republican Party
7. Committeewoman, 24th Ward at Missouri Republican Party
8. Volunteer at GOP Missouri Republican Party

As her comments become more known the GOP will attempt to spin Barnes' clout in the party as little, when in reality she is a big player behind the scenes.

20120824-09	19:35	SteveM	Fw: Thank God That Godless Castro Didn't Destroy America [Instead, It Was the Godless Dollar! -SteveB]
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[Source of original email unknown. -SteveB]

What others see plainly, we often ignore. Here's something to think about.

I remember asking dad about Castro when I was about 9 years old. I asked, "Is Castro a good guy or bad?"

Dad said he couldn't tell!! This was about 1955. At the time, Dad was in the Army there.

Cuba was fairly close and in the news a lot. The Cubans were asking the same question!

Ike was president.

This past July, we had the pleasure of sharing a summer barbecue with a refugee from Cuba. Our dinner conversation was starkly different than most.

This refugee came to the United States as a young boy in the early 1960's. His family was more fortunate than most, as they were able to bring a suitcase and \$100 when they fled Castro's newly formed revolutionary paradise.

Our dinner consisted of all-American fare: hamburgers, potato salad, watermelon and fresh ears of sweet corn. This is a menu shared with family and friends nationwide while celebrating the birth of our beloved America on the Fourth of July.

We began with a simple discussion about our country, and the direction it has taken since Barack Obama came to power. We shared the usual complaints about the sour economy and liberal social engineering emanating from the rulers in Washington.

But then he said it. The sentence came naturally. I assume it was unplanned. But it carried the weight of a freight train. "You know when Castro took power, none of us knew he was a Communist".

We sat stunned. He continued, "Yes, we all thought he was a patriot, a nationalist. Before the revolution he didn't sound like a radical."

The comparison at this point was easy, and I interjected, "You mean just like Barack Obama?"

He responded; "Yes, just like Barack Obama."

He continued, "We were all shocked as the government just continued to grab more power. First they said the revolution is over, so please turn in your guns. We all complied."

I remember my uncle saying after it started; "Castro will only nationalize some of the big industries. He will never come and take our family hardware store!!" But that is exactly what happened. Castro started with the sugar mills and the large industries, but they eventually came and knocked on the door of our family hardware store. My family had run this store for generations. They said we now own the hardware store, you work for us. And that nice, large four-bedroom home you own? It is now our property also, and you can move yourself and five children into two rooms of the house, because others are moving in with you."

The lesson learned from this discussion, is a lesson most Americans refuse to hear. Political leaders can lie about their agenda and once in office they can take totally unexpected turns.

If you had asked us three years ago if we thought General Motors would be nationalized, we would have never believed it. We could never contemplate a country where the rule of law, the most fundamental building block of a justice society would be evaporating, just like it did in Castro's Cuba in the early 1960's.

But the news of injustice keeps increasing. Black Panthers are not charged with wrong doing by the U.S. Department of Justice...because their crimes are against whites. The bondholders of GM are stripped of their assets without due process by the government! Governmental leaders are bribed in full daylight only to have all investigation of the crimes stifled by the Attorney General.

The U.S. borders are over run with crime and illegal activity, and the leaders in D.C. act as if it is important to protect the lawbreakers while the innocent are killed and over run. When local communities attempt to enforce the law, they are ridiculed and threatened as racists and bigots. They are sued by the very administration...entrusted with enforcing the law.

Without the rule of law, the U.S. Constitution is a sham!! Without the rule of law, our beloved America is swiftly becoming a country where only the well connected and politically powerful will be safe. As Michelle Malkin has so eloquently explained in her recent book, a culture of corruption has replaced honest government.

The only way this problem will be fixed, is by massive citizen action. All honest citizens that want to be treated equally, must come together and demand that the favoritism, the bribes, the uneven enforcement of law end now!! And yes, it can happen here.

PLEASE SEND THIS TO EVERYONE YOU KNOW!! And may God save the United States of America!

[Ya, this is really all really new, exciting news! From when, the '50's? Hey, that's really modern thinking for a Republican, way after the 19th Century. Ya, send it to everyone, you lazy people! Yawn! –SteveB]

The least you can do is forward this email. 6 million plus Jews didn't believe it would happen in Germany either!!! If you're a Christian in these United States of America, you're next on the list. The real problem here is, the boy from Cuba did manage to make it to the U.S. We will not have any place to escape to except death! And, for the most part even though I'm forwarding this to recipients, probably only 5 or 10 will even read it.

"There's never a wrong time to do the right thing, and never a right time to do the wrong thing."

People think this will never happen in America but it IS HAPPENING TODAY!!!

Fairness isn't giving my money to LAZY PEOPLE!.

20120824-11	20:17	SteveB	Re: Thank God That Godless Castro Didn't Destroy America (reply to SteveM, above)
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This was obviously written by an insane person.

<http://islandvoice.blogspot.com/2012/01/remembrance-of-cuban-immigrant.html>

Yep! Obama is Castro and Bush is Hitler. Now that got us real far in solving our problems, didn't it? Or are all Republicans like Paul Ryan, wanting to run away from real-world problems like a crying baby?

20120824-10	20:04	SteveB	"My New Rule for Todd Akin and the Republican Party"
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This is a truly wonderful, completely true and funny article. You should read it to the end and think about it.

Then, let me know specifically what you think.

"My New Rule for Todd Akin and the Republican Party" by Bill Maher, Huffington Post

Aug. 24, 2012, (http://www.huffingtonpost.com/bill-maher/todd-akin-republicans_b_1826617.html)

New Rule: If your entire party tries to get rid of you, and you stay in, you can't talk about how easy it is for a woman to push a stupid prick out of her body.

I don't want to waste another second thinking about Todd Akin, and his theory that you can't get pregnant unless your eggs are asking for it. Here's the only thing you need to know about Todd Akin and human anatomy: he's an asshole. What I want to talk about is how it's not a coincidence that the party of fundamentalism is also the party of fantasy. When I say religion is a mental illness, this is what I mean: it corrodes your mental faculties to the point where you can believe in tiny ninja warriors who hide in vaginas and lie in wait for bad people's sperm.

Evangelicals might like to pretend that the magical thinking that they indulge in at home doesn't affect what they do at the office, but it absolutely does. The brain that believes in angels and miracles and Jesus riding a dinosaur is trained to see the world not as it is, but as you want it to be.

Republicans would like to pretend like Congressman Akin's substitution of superstition for science is a lone problem but it's not: they're all magical thinkers, on nearly every issue. They don't get their answers on climate change from climatologists, they get them from the Book of Genesis. Hence Sharia Law in America is a dire threat, and global warming a hoax.

Or take the issue that consumes the right these days, our sea of red ink: Republicans are united in their fervent desire to reduce the deficit, but they want to do it in some magical fashion that doesn't involve raising taxes or cutting any spending. When given a choice in polls between these two options, a majority of Republicans check "none of the above" as a way to reduce the deficit. That's like deciding to pay off your student loans by daydreaming.

Or as it's known on Capitol Hill, supply-side economics. Remember that magic beans theory? That you actually bring in more revenue by bringing in less? Ronald Reagan believed it. But at least back in the '80's it was new. The thing is, we tried it, and it doesn't work. Yet, Paul Ryan, who every shit-for-brains pundit in America keeps telling us is a "serious" guy, still believes in the supply-side theory. All the Republicans do. They all believe in something that both science and history have shown to be pure fantasy. The symbol for their party shouldn't be an elephant -- it should be a unicorn.

Paul Ryan is their tough guy on spending but he doesn't want to touch defense -- that's right, a budget hawk who doesn't think there's anything bloated about the Defense Department's budget. It's like being a health inspector and finding nothing wrong with the Asian place that has the chicken hanging in the window. This is how low we've put the bar for political courage -- that you can just write, "I want a pony" in a binder and call it the "Plan For Restoring Vision For the Future of America's Greatness" or some shit, and then everyone has to refer to you as the serious one in Congress. It reminds me of health care. Republicans are for all the popular things, like covering people with pre-existing conditions, but they're not for the part where you pay for it, like the mandate. Just like they were for our recent wars, but not for paying for them. For the prescription drug bill, but not for paying for it.

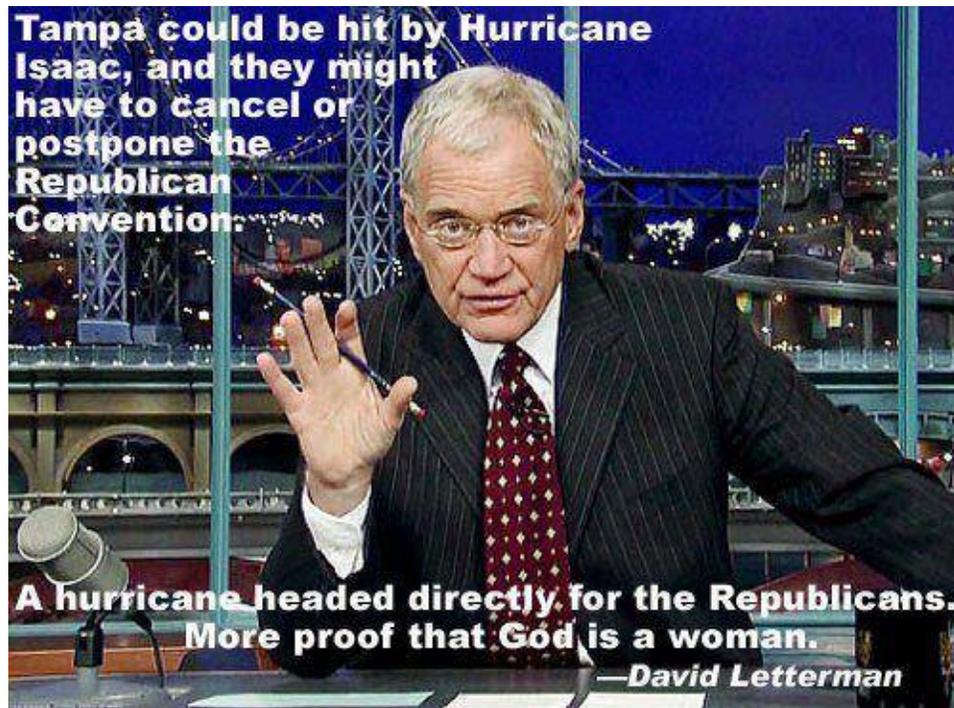
How do they get away with it? They know that, because we're already such a religious country, our minds are primed for magical, fantasy thinking. The gullibility comes factory-installed. They've learned that you appeal not to an American's head, but to his gut -- it's a much bigger target. But here's the problem: life is complicated. I mean, I know we know some things for sure, like why Jesus put us here on Earth: to watch "Here Comes Honey Boo Boo" on a 50-inch TV screen. But what about the Chinese slaves who made the TV? What about carbon from the coal that generated the electricity? What about the Walmart where we bought it, where the workers don't have health insurance? What about racism, or the oceans turning into nail polish remover? The grown-up answer is: identify problems scientifically, prioritize and solve. The Republican answer is: there isn't a problem. And anyone who tells you different is a liar who hates America. We don't have to make hard choices. We just have to ignore the science and the math -- that's why God gave us values.

If rape babies throw a monkey wrench into the whole right-to-life pitch, just make believe rape babies don't exist. If you want to cut down on teen pregnancy, just tell curious kids with raging hormones to practice abstinence. Until they get married. Because everyone knows, that's when the f*cking never stops. Health care? Not a problem if you just keep repeating, "We have the greatest health care in the world." Even though the U.N. ranks it 37th.

What's the solution to global warming? It's that it isn't real, and even if it is, big whoop, just buy an air conditioner, you pussy. Republicans also believe that putting the word "clean" next to the word "coal" creates something called clean coal. Even though there's the exact same amount of evidence for clean coal as there is for Todd Akin's mistaken baby makin' theory.

Republicans also believe if they kick all the Mexicans out of the country, the strawberries will pick themselves, and that if they cut the safety net all the poor blacks are "resting" in, they will fall gently to the ground, stand up, dust themselves off, and get good-paying jobs as Olympic gymnasts.

Next week in Tampa the Republicans must admit that the difference between a GOP convention and Comic-Con is that the people at Comic-Con have a much firmer grasp of reality.



If they say they built it alone, they lie. Here's just one typical example. Liars! What a problem for Republicans!

"Sher Valenzuela, GOP's 'We Built It' Speaker, Received Millions in Government Loans" by Nate C. Hindman, Huffington Post

Aug. 24, 2012, (http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/08/24/sher-valenzuela-we-built-it_n_1828847.html?utm_hp_ref=politics&ir=Politics)

Sher Valenzuela, who is scheduled to speak at the Republican National Convention next week, embodies the American Dream. The 58-year-old, who is running for lieutenant governor in Delaware, started an upholstery business with her husband in their garage more than a decade ago to pay for their son's autism treatments. The business, which makes padding for baseball umpires and vests for the Israeli military, now employs at least 40 workers and pulls in millions in revenue each year.

But there's one problem for Republicans, who hope to align Valenzuela's story with the convention's "We Built It" theme: **She didn't actually build her company without the government's help.**

Valenzuela's company received roughly \$17 million in federal loans and contracts and she's openly encouraged other business owners to rely on taxpayer funding, Media Matters reported Thursday.

"But where do I start?" Valenzuela wrote in a presentation to a group of women entrepreneurs at a Delaware business conference earlier this year. "With your BIGGEST secret weapon!" the presentation read. **"You start with the no cost/low-cost resources that you, the taxpayer, have already paid for."**

[Continue reading at Huffington Post...](#)

[20120825-07](#) 10:25 SteveM Re: "Sher Valenzuela, GOP's 'We Built It' Speaker, Received Millions in Government Loans" (reply to SteveB, above)

Looks like they paid it back, unlike Solyndra and Abound Solar. And they didn't move their manufacturing overseas, unlike Fisker Automotive.

The larger question is why the administration was pursuing a green-energy policy in which companies are going bankrupt and wasting taxpayer money, even when warned against as bad loans by their own staff?

OH YEAH, Pelosi and Reid and big bundlers benefited directly from the money. Lying f*cking thieves!

[20120826-17](#) 19:07 SteveB Re: "Sher Valenzuela, GOP's 'We Built It' Speaker, Received Millions in Government Loans" (reply to SteveM, above)

Yet, I notice that you don't argue the point that no business is built alone.

That is the larger question.

[20120825-02](#) 05:35 SteveB "American Exceptionalism: The 2012 GOP Platform"

The most extreme example of spin I've ever seen in my life, and that was certainly necessary if an attempt was going to be made to make this stuff palatable to average voters.

http://images.politico.com/global/2012/08/preview_of_american_exceptionalism_-_gop2.html.

[20120825-03](#) 06:02 SteveB "Four Laughable Explanations for Mitt Romney's Birther Joke"

OK, Mitt, we know what country you were born in, but we sure don't know what country you pay taxes in. Apparently not much to the USA! Liar! Tax cheat!

"Four Laughable Explanations for Mitt Romney's Birther Joke" by David Weigel, Slate

Aug. 24, 2012,

(http://www.slate.com/blogs/weigel/2012/08/24/four_laughable_explanations_for_mitt_romney_s_birther_joke.html)

So this happened today in Michigan:

"No one's ever asked to see my birth certificate," Mitt Romney quips. "They know that this is the place that we were born and raised." Without using our powers of telepathy to read Romney's mind, it sounds like a classic example of the guy saying something that offends people without knowing why it would. Here's why: Romney's a white guy who grew up in Michigan, whereas Barack Obama's a black guy who spent some formative years in Indonesia.

It's a simple story. Romney made a joke that relies on a debunked conspiracy theory about the president—a theory especially popular with people who don't like blacks and foreigners. Romney's crowd cheered. He probably opened up a preconvention worm-can that he didn't mean to open. This, I think, is why we're already seeing the comment spun away. The four biggest spins:

It's just a joke. Well, sure, but who's the joke for? Since the summer of 2008, false rumors have circulated online, alleging that Obama's pregnant teenage mother flew to Kenya—or something like that—and gave birth to a kid who wasn't eligible for the presidency. Starting that year, activists started filing lawsuits, full of false information, aiming

to get Obama kicked off of presidential ballots. In 2009, somewhat surprisingly, the conspiracy theory became even more popular—more lawsuits, members of Congress proposing legislation to require birth certificates from candidates, endless rumors at sites like WorldNetDaily that encouraged people to support soldiers who refused to serve under Obama. Even through this year, Donald Trump has continued pushing the theory and Maricopa County, Ariz., Sheriff Joe Arpaio has convened a "cold case posse" that produced evidence—all bogus—that the birth certificate is forged. Romney's been endorsed by both those guys.

It's fair play because Obama lowered the tone of the campaign by joking about Seamus. OK. Mitt Romney once put his dog in a kennel on the roof of his car and drove to Canada. But Obama wasn't actually born in Kenya. Spot the difference? I completely see the comparison between the Seamus story and Obama's story of eating "dog meat" in Indonesia. Both of those things are embarrassing and they happened.

The Obama campaign has accused Romney of all manner of things, like being a felon, and this is just "feigned outrage." Hence the Seamus reference. Stephanie Cutter, Obama's deputy campaign manager, responded to the mid-July wave of Romney/Bain stories by saying Romney had either lied to the Federal Election Commission, "which is a felony," or was "misrepresenting his position at Bain to the American people. If that's the case, if he was lying to the American people, that's a real character and trust issue." Over time this has morphed into a weapon of Romney umbrage—he claims that the campaign called him "a felon." Lucky for him, reporters have adopted that take on the quote. Two problems, though. Cutter was (badly) making an either/or statement—it obviously wasn't likely that Romney had committed a crime, so maybe he was lying. Also, Cutter is a surrogate for Obama. Obama himself hasn't said anything like that. (He's just disagreed with the "your campaign called Romney a felon" spin, which has been interpreted as proof that he endorses the "attack," which wasn't really made then and hasn't been made since.) We assign more weight to statements made by candidates than by surrogates. I warned you that this would be obvious, right?

Hey, Obama has joked about the birth certificate, too! How can it be offensive? There's some truth here. Ever since the Great Trump Interregnum of 2011, when the president published his long-form birth certificate, his campaign has sold a coffee mug that reproduces the form under the slogan "Made in the U.S.A." There are, right now, hipsters who love Obama but have those mugs in their cabinets. But a fairly clever child is probably familiar with this rule: You can say certain things about yourself and your friends that other people can't say. In 2005, when he was gearing up to run for president and his state was famous for legal gay marriage, Mitt Romney liked to riff on the Mormon church's past practices of polygamy. "I believe," he'd say, that "marriage should be between a man and a woman ... and a woman ... and a woman." But when Romney ran for U.S. Senate in 1994 and then-Rep. Joe Kennedy brought up the polygamy issue, Romney—correctly—lit into him. (Somebody correct me if I'm wrong, but I vaguely remember George Romney going nuclear on Kennedy.) Republicans would light into Obama if he ever made a joke like Romney's. I could explain why, but it's so obvious that you might pass out.

20120825-04	08:26	SandyI	Fw: Obama Punching Bag
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Oh where, oh where, have good manners gone? Oh where, oh where, can they be?

Like birds flying in a V, when we feel the presence of others moving along side of us, there is little we cannot accomplish. Thanks to those that have flown alongside me and given me wind beneath my wings.

Just another example of how mean-spirited it's getting out the:

from Nancy:

Hey, Lauren...

I'm writing to you because you always seem to have a way of "calling out inappropriate behavior".

I am getting this from a first-hand attendee...Today, at LSCC's Magnolia Room, after an Estate Planning Seminar, John Feldman (of Cauthen & Feldman, PA in Tavares) raffled-off a 5' punching bag of President Obama (w/a black

eye). While he may have thought this was funny, it was offensive to some attending. This seminar was attended by lawyers, accountants and other professionals, though I use that word loosely under this circumstance.

The event was sponsored by the First National Bank of Mount Dora, Florida Hospital Waterman and Lake Sumter's Foundation.

I called Mr. Feldman, only to find he is "out" until after Labor Day. I called Rosanne Brandeburg, who attended the event, and she said she thought it was inappropriate...but noted, "no one spoke up".

In this day and age of shootings, nasty politics and disrespect of others rights, I find it highly inciteful (if there is such a word) to raffle something like this in a public venue.

I just needed to vent...am waiting for a call back from Feldman...

20120825-06	08:49	Pam	Re: Obama Punching Bag (reply to SandyI, above)
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"Bad manners" is an understatement. It may have become bad form in most circles to be overtly racist, but there's still something very nasty under the surface of our "post-racial" society. Disguising it in "humor" is a cheap way of making a point. You can always tell what pushes people's buttons by what they laugh at--for Catholics, it's the church; for Germans, it's scatological; for the Chinese, it's someone in distress; for the British, it's silliness, and so on. I think there are levels of humor too, with practical jokes being near the bottom. This guy's "joke" was no joke at all; it was an insult dressed up as a joke. If you don't find it funny, then you're a stuffed shirt, according to the perpetrator. It's hostile to turn a joke against the listener, and that's what this man did. Humor and good manners are what keep us sane and civilized, but sometimes the nasty beast breaks through.

20120825-05	08:33	SteveB	"Romney's Lying Machine"
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"Romney's Lying Machine" by Robert Reich, Huffington Post

Aug. 24, 2012, (http://www.huffingtonpost.com/robert-reich/romneys-lying-machine_b_1827787.html)

I've been struck by the baldness of Romney's repetitive lies about Obama -- that Obama ended the work requirement under welfare, for example, or that Obama's Affordable Care Act cuts \$716 billion from Medicare benefits.

The mainstream media along with a half-dozen independent fact-checking organizations and sites have called Romney on these whoppers, but to no avail. He keeps making these assertions.

Every campaign is guilty of exaggerations, embellishments, distortions, and half-truths. But this is another thing altogether. I've been directly involved in seven presidential campaigns, and I don't recall a presidential candidate lying with such audacity, over and over again. Why does he do it, and how can he get away with it?

The obvious answer is such lies are effective. Polls show voters are starting to believe them, especially in swing states where they're being repeated constantly in media spots financed by Romney's super PAC or ancillary PACs and so-called "social welfare" organizations (political fronts disguised as charities, such as Karl Rove and the Koch brothers have set up).

Romney's lying machine is extraordinarily well financed. By August, according to Jane Mayer in her recent New Yorker article, at least 33 billionaires had each donated a quarter of a million dollars or more to groups aiming to defeat Obama -- with most of it flooding into attack ads in swing states.

In early August, "Americans for Prosperity," one of the nonprofit front groups masquerading as a charity, and founded in part by billionaire right-wingers Charles and David Koch, bought some \$27 million in ad time on spots now airing in eleven swing states.

So Romney's lying machine is working.

But what does all this tell us about the man who is running this lying machine? (Or if Romney's not running it, what does it tell us about a man who would select the people who are?)

We knew he was a cypher -- that he'll say and do whatever is expedient, change positions like a chameleon, eschew any core principles.

Yet resorting to outright lies -- and organizing a presidential campaign around a series of lies -- reveals a whole new level of cynicism, a profound disdain for what remains of civility in public life, and a disrespect of the democratic process.

The question is whether someone who is willing to resort to such calculated lies, and build a campaign machine around them, can be worthy of the public's trust with the most powerful office in the world.

[20120825-08](#) 14:17 Pam Money & Politics

I just read an article in the most recent *New Yorker* about how Obama has not "sucked up" enough to big donors and consequently is falling behind in the financial race to the White House. In this case, his virtues are his downfall: he disdains big money and can't find it in himself to court it. I admire him for this, even though I can see it may cost him the presidency.

The thing that really gets me is the truly stratospheric amount of money the Right is willing to spend to defeat Obama. I feel like the tide is running out on this country. Piece by piece, we are losing our democracy and replacing it with an oligarchy that makes the Gilded Age look rusty. I remember a time when TV stations were mandated to give "equal time" to opposing candidates, ensuring that one side would not dominate the other. That's certainly gone by the boards. Citizens United, Karl Rove, the Koch brothers, that Las Vegas billionaire: the list is seemingly endless. The tsunami of Republican funding isn't going to go away. We're all going to drown in it. I hope I'm wrong. I'm trying to prepare myself for a Romney presidency with the hope that, if he wins, he will be at least sane. But the thought of Paul Ryan just a heart beat away from the Oval Office makes me shudder. When the Tea Party got started, I thought they were just a bunch of uneducated rubes with Confederate flags on their pick-up trucks, but now they've become the driving force in right-wing politics. I know I'm preaching to the choir and stating the obvious, but I feel so helpless. I hope Obama wins, because the Supreme Court depends on it for one thing, but I also hope that, if he doesn't, I will be proved wrong about the danger I sense we're in.

[20120825-10](#) 15:12 SteveG Re: Money & Politics (reply to Pam, above)

If I had \$20-40 million a year income and an IRA of \$100 million or so, and a net worth of \$200 or more millions, I would have really good accountants, not pay more than \$1 over the taxes I owed. I would not be running for president though. My ego would have all it needed in knowing I played the finance/investment game and won.

Ryan's foreign policy experience is voting on a war or two. Romney's is investing overseas. Claim to fame as a governor is a health care package that he doesn't like now. Ryan and Romney change their beliefs more than some people change clothes. Slippery slopes, unfortunately, seem to be here to stay and we are sliding fast.

[20120825-11](#) 16:04 Art Re: Money & Politics (reply to Pam, above)

To me one of the interesting things that seems to be happening is the repeated gaffs being made by the Republicans don't seem to move the polls one bit. Romney really wants to continue beating the drum on the economy and jobs thinking he can score big points here, but the campaign keeps getting pushed off track by one stupid Republican self inflicted wound after another. Romney's taxes, Ryan's repeated lies, the Akin "legitimate rape thing", it just goes on and on. Although I am sure the Democrats would have liked to have made some of

these things happen, the facts is, it is the repeated stupidity of the Republicans that cause them to occur. Yes, the Democrats take advantage, but they are simply acting on gifts handed to them.

We all see this but the alarming fact is, it does not sway that racist core of the Republican Party one bit. They would vote for Adolf Hitler or Joe Stalin today, if they believe it would result in getting that ni**er out of the White House. I think by now any even remotely thinking American adult realizes that the Republican candidates are probably the most dishonest, secretive and just generally scummy bunch we have seen in a long time. My wife played today a Facebook hour radio broadcast of some Limbaugh type idiot in Texas, going on how 9-11 was a government plot, Bin Ladin died many years ago, Ghadafi is really in hiding and on an on, sent by some acquaintance of hers. People in middle America and sadly elsewhere really listen to this garbage and all too many really believe. We have some on them in FriendsOfTheMiddle. Have you ever noticed how often we are called "dummy" or "stupid" or "blind sheep" by people who I will bet you have little or no advanced education degrees, speak no foreign languages, have never really gone anywhere overseas and probably have not read a real book in 20 years.

So, the focus now seems to me to be making sure all the people who have seen through this charade get out and vote. We are not going to get the racists to change. They have made up their minds and they are really not interested in any facts that would affect that. President Obama still has black skin no matter what the Republicans do and that is all that matters. Maybe in time some will begin to think but right now we are kidding ourselves if we believe they are going to suddenly wake up one day and say, "You know, they are right!"

Just my opinion.

[20120825-12](#) 16:27 Pam Re: Money & Politics (reply to Art, above)

I wonder if the way I'm feeling has anything in common with cultivated Jews in 1930s Germany: We're a civilized people. Surely the barbarians can't prevail. Just because we're Americans doesn't mean terrible things can't happen here. It worries me that if I can dream up all sorts of scary scenarios, then the nut jobs will be able to do that too--and carry them out. The Nixon and Clinton scandals were rather entertaining, if infuriating, but the scandal of our political climate today is frightening. Am I being an alarmist? I don't want to turn into a nut job myself.

There's an article in the New Yorker about the war in Syria too (as well as a great story by Alice Munro). What's going on in Syria is insane. There are so many sides, and people keep changing sides, and they're all trying to kill each other for Allah. What I see are groups of young men high on testosterone who get off on beating other young men bloody. It's primal. What I see in the U.S. is a cohort of middle-aged blowhards who wouldn't know the truth if they fell over it and get off on hating non-whites. It's odd that they don't hate the rich, who are really short-changing them, but they're so easy to manipulate and the 1% are so good at that. I worry that these pea brains will get behind the unemployed, undereducated young men with concealed weapons about their person and let 'em loose. I know we've had difficult times in America in the past, and I also know that some of those difficult times have included blood in the streets and the burning of neighborhoods. The young don't remember the turbulent 'sixties, when political disorder was like a tang in the air for a lot of people. Maybe the time is ripe for another gasket to blow.

Somebody, please, talk me out of thinking this way.

[20120825-14](#) 17:51 SteveB Re: Money & Politics (reply to Pam, above)

It's not too early to think about self defense, before they take all our guns away! That's what the Right has been preparing for, fantasizing about, and drooling over for years, right?

I know one thing. If the shit starts coming down, I'm moving in with Art and his friends!

[20120826-01](#) 03:34 Dennis Re: Money & Politics (reply to Pam, above)

I just visited Auschwitz-Birkenau in Poland. It makes you understand what can happen when people are willingly ignorant of what is being done to them. So, no Pam, you are not being alarmist. Of course, raising the comparison to the extreme situation of Nazi Germany just causes people to dismiss what can happen when they lack vigilance. The Nazis, however, are not an isolated historical example, but rather a recurring phenomenon of hate and violence.

[20120826-11](#) 11:24 Pam Re: Money & Politics (reply to Dennis, above)

I just watched a BBC series called "The Last Enemy," a sort of dystopian story about an experiment to implant little nano-monitor in people so they could be tracked every minute of their lives. The rice-size gadget would store all your data, allow you access to transport, your bank account, etc. etc. I thought it was pretty good, because it gave the argument for both sides: those who fear "Big Brother" vs. those who want to root out terrorism. Arguments for: the UK has a good government and wouldn't abuse it; it will only target the bad guys, which will make everyone safer; it will be unnoticeable to the person carrying it; you'll never lose your car keys or forget a password ever again. Against: who are we if we're all reduced to data?; what if the government isn't good?; it would be easy to target and trace our enemies (in the show the device was intended to target Arabs, infect, and kill them); you would be under constant surveillance, at least potentially; it's a complete invasion of privacy.

Of course, the characters who wanted to go forward with T.I.A (Total Information Access) were depicted as the bad guys, though you don't realize just who's bad and who's good until almost the end, while the good guys want to put a stop to the whole invasive program. I certainly know where I stand on this, but I can see how seductive the idea of absolute safety could be. We already put computer chips in our pets, and some people even want to put them in our kids. Everything about us is already online anyway. We're monitored all the time and the pop-up ads on our computers are targeted especially to us (I get lots about anti-aging creams). I've got a webcam in my computer. How do I know no one is monitoring me even now? Are we on a slippery slope here? Should we be alarmed? I've noticed that everything that science fiction writers have come up with has eventually become reality: submarines, airplanes, watches you could communicate with; instant messaging; access to information in seconds, Skype. You can go all the way back to Leonardo and Jules Verne and trace this. We're way past "1984" and "Brave New World," with CCTV, phone taps, and the rewriting of history. I know things that seem scary in a novel or a movie can easily become an accepted part of life: cameras that catch speeders or runners of red lights, cameras in banks, metal detectors and body scans at airports, home alarm systems. I even went to a restaurant once that had a metal detector at the door. That gave me pause. When I was a kid, no one locked their door. Now my 7-yr old grandson has to be walked to school by a parent, and he lives directly across the street. When fear rules, no one is free. It seems to be that America is becoming more and more frightened (I know I am), and I dread what might lie ahead. What will the world be like when 2012 is the good old days?

[20120826-15](#) 12:21 Art Re: Money & Politics (reply to Pam, above)

Well said. Besides history, my other secret literary love is science fiction. As Pam writes, so many of the things that had become common in SCFI writings are now coming to pass. One of the common themes is an implanted artificial Intelligence (AI) that would give us all immediate access to all sorts of information, communications etc. Well we are almost there with the cell phone. I think many of us are of a similar age. Just think back how incredibly rapid the transition has been first to the computer, then the cell phone and now the smart phone. None of these things existed when we grew up. Remember the Dick Tracey comic strip and the watch radio. All pure fantasy 40 years ago.

As you also points out there is a downside. A few days ago police tracked a marijuana trafficker by following his cell phone for a few days. Sign of the time.

[20120825-13](#) 17:41 SteveB Re: Money & Politics (reply to Art, above)

I'm worried about the polls. I don't understand what's going on at all!

Exactly, Art. Getting out the vote is going to be so very important!!! For instance, I read the other day that O is leading among black folks XX% to **zero per cent** for Romney-Ryan! That's right! Zero! It was actually some fraction, but less than a half. What Hispanics will vote Republican? I guess even a lot of the Jewish vote has been lost with the abortion and Fundamentalist crap.

That leaves women and racists. What is God's name is wrong with American women????

All these people have to actually vote!

I just have to say one more thing: I literally HATE politicians who flat-out lie to me! Don't understand why everyone doesn't feel the same...

Oh, did I tell you I got emails from GaryC, Dale, and SteveM? They've all seen the light and decided to vote O! ;-)

[20120825-17](#) 19:03 Art Re: Money & Politics (reply to SteveB, above)

SteveB: I'm worried about the polls. I don't understand what's going on at all!

Of course, on that last one!

[20120825-15](#) 18:06 SteveG Re: Money & Politics (reply to SteveB, above)

Moving in with Art if all goes wrong may not be bad.

Polls – wait until after the conventions and see what happens. The scary thing are the voting law changes – PA, Ohio, Florida, Texas, etc. The more people that do not have the proper picture ID to vote, the better it is for republicans. Most changes in voting laws are in republican controlled states, are seemingly designed to limit older/black/Hispanic/ethnic voters.

[20120825-16](#) 18:09 SteveG "Akin for the Truth: How Are US Religious Fundamentalists Any Different Than Middle Eastern Ones?"

"Akin for the Truth: How Are US Religious Fundamentalists Any Different Than Middle Eastern Ones?" by Shirin Sadeghi, Truthout

Aug. 25, 2012, (<http://truth-out.org/opinion/item/11068-akin-for-the-truth-how-are-us-religious-fundamentalists-any-different-than-middle-eastern-ones>)

In the American media, the news from Iran, Pakistan, Egypt, Afghanistan and elsewhere generally runs along the same themes: scary, violent and religious nutsos. But isn't it time the US media and the American public agreed that America isn't much different? America has just as many religious fundamentalists and nut jobs, and they are making public statements just as often - if not more often - than the religious fundies elsewhere.

Are we to believe that a fundamentalist in a suit is less scary than a fundamentalist in a beard, even if both are spouting hatred against women?

Missouri Republican Congressman Todd Akin's recent comments about how women can't become pregnant from what he called "legitimate rape" was just the latest in a long line of pronouncements from American leaders with strong religious backgrounds who believe they are an authority on women's needs and health. Akin is no different than the numerous Iranian clerics who've said such ridiculous things as women who have extramarital sex "cause earthquakes," or the Egyptian cleric who first said that a husband and wife cannot be completely naked while

having sex. (This was then modified by scholars, and it was agreed that the most important thing is that no one look at the vagina at the scene of the sex act.) Or the fatwa after fatwa about men and women working together, schooling together and all the rest (sounds a lot like segregation, doesn't it America?).

In the early days of the Taliban, before they began their habit of bombing girls' schools, they too, started out with making ridiculous comments about women and sexuality. It's only just escalated to the violence we've become familiar with.

The truth is, Akin and his fellow religious fundamentalist men the world over are very much the same when it comes to women: they know more about women than women do. In their minds, of course. Because none of them know what it's like to have a period or to give birth or to suffer the tragic and deeply disturbing decision to abort a baby. (Many women don't even know what it's like to suffer through a decision about an unwanted baby.) Further, no man knows what it's like to live in a world where women are second-class citizens - although that is a fact even in the most "civilized" and modern countries. None of them know what it's like to work just as hard as a man and not get the job, or not get the promotion, or, certainly, not get the same amount of pay.

Sure, there are a lot of female fundamentalists, too. It is deeply troubling when women take views against women, but at least we cannot accuse them of speaking out of turn, and you'll be hard-pressed to find any woman - even the most conservative and devoutly religious - who shares all the views of a biased man when it comes to women's rights, health care and needs. She would, after all, be speaking against herself.

But no man knows what it is like to be a woman, even though too many of them think they do. And too many of them attain public positions that give them a platform to spout their sexism. It is extraordinary that we don't hear female politicians make the same blanket statements about men, yet it makes a great deal of sense: in the patriarchy of world gender dynamics, a woman should focus on her area of expertise and leave the rest to the men.

Akin, a graduate of the Covenant Theological Seminary in St. Louis, Missouri - he has a master of divinity - has gathered along the way, largely due to societal cues, that he is an authority on things that he is not, because he is a man. Like Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell, who recently spoke on behalf of all the women in the Republican Party when he said that his female colleagues "don't see any evidence" of a war on women, it never struck Akin that he is not qualified to speak for women, particularly when he is attacking their rights.

And he is not the first. It was just this year that Wisconsin state senator Glenn Grothman said that, "money is more important for men," as he argued against a Wisconsin state equal pay act. In his view of the matter, there is no pay discrimination because women simply don't want to be paid as much as men do, particularly when they are married and more focused on raising kids (as he duly noted). Grothman, a devout Christian, also made headlines this year when he said that "unwanted and mistimed pregnancies" are "a choice" that women make and are not actually accidents.

Incidentally, Grothman has never been married and does not have kids.

Or what about Idaho state senator Chuck Winder, who just this year said that women may not actually know the difference between rape and the normal course of sexual relations in marriage (something Winder believes involves a woman being obligated to have sexual relations with her husband even when she does not want to): "I would hope that when a woman goes into a physician, with a rape issue, that that physician will indeed ask her about perhaps her marriage. Was this pregnancy caused by normal relations in a marriage, or was it truly caused by a rape?" He went on to imply that many women are using rape as an excuse for abortion.

And then there is the totality of what many people are simply referring to as the war on women in America: the attitudes, statements, media bias and campaign platforms that together work to denigrate women and take away their rights simply because of the physical realities of their bodies. The war on women refers, primarily, to the Republican Party - a party largely consisting of devout men whose understanding of religion provides them the context and confidence to make statements and decisions about women's body parts, sexual relations and reproduction, in addition to women's role in society (and in the home), and their right to equality in employment and pay.

A great many of these male politicians allow themselves to address these issues because of their religious qualifications: either they are, in fact, ordained ministers and divinity school graduates, or they are so devout in their religion that they are above reproach when it comes to being pious.

All of the petty statements by these sexist men would amount to just words in the air, except that in America's male-dominated Congress (women hold less than 20 percent of seats in Congress, and state legislatures don't look much more equal either) - just as in the governments of those Middle Eastern and South Asian nations that are vilified in the US media - bill after bill, law after law has been presented, passed and signed that depletes women's rights. American women need just as much protection from their religious fundamentalist men as women anywhere else do - the problem is, not enough of them know it.

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20120826-03	06:35	SteveB	"The Fountainhead"
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"The Fountainhead" by Uri Avnery, OpEdNews

Aug. 25, 2012, (<http://www.opednews.com/articles/The-Fountainhead-by-Uri-Avnery-120825-802.html>)

I was not interested in Paul Ryan, the man about to be nominated by the Republican party for the office of Vice President, until the name Ayn Rand popped up.

Ayn Rand, it was said, was one of the main inspirations for his particular philosophy. Since Ryan is being represented not as an ordinary, run-of-the-mill politician, like Mitt Romney, but as a profound political and economic thinker, the inspiration deserves some scrutiny.

Like most people in this country, Ayn Rand first entered my life as the author of *The Fountainhead*, a novel that came out four years before the birth of the State of Israel. It quickly became a bestseller. The movie based on it, with Gary Cooper playing the main role, was even more popular.

It is the story of an architect of genius (roughly similar to Frank Lloyd Wright) who follows his own individual style and disdains the tastes of the masses. When his architectural design for a housing project is altered by the builders, he blows the buildings up, defending his actions in court in a stirring speech in defense of individualism.

(Honest disclosure: I have often dreamed of doing the same to certain buildings in Tel Aviv, especially the luxury hotels built between my home and the sea.)

I started to read her second bestseller, *Atlas Shrugged*, in which she set out her philosophy in detail. But I must confess, to my eternal shame, that I never finished it. It bored me.

One day in 1974, my friend Dan Ben-Amotz called me and demanded that I immediately meet a young genius he had discovered called Dr. Moshe Kroy.

Ben-Amotz was a character by himself. A man of my age, he was at the time Israel's most conspicuous humorist and an icon of the generation that fought in the 1948 war and created the new Hebrew culture. Ben-Amotz, like many of us, was not only a self-made man, but also self-invented. He was known as the ultimate Sabra (native-born Israeli). Much later it transpired that he was actually born in Poland, arrived in Palestine as a boy and adopted the very Hebrew-sounding name to replace his original name -- Moshe Tehilimzeigger ("reciter of psalms" in Yiddish).

He brought Kroy to my home and I was impressed. Here was an unusually erudite 24-year-old youngster, already a lecturer at Tel Aviv University, with thick glasses and very outspoken philosophical views.

It appeared that he was a True Believer in the teachings of Ayn Rand, which she called Objectivism. This proclaimed that egoism was the basic duty of every human being. Any kind of social commitment was a sin against

nature. Only by serving his own interest and cleansing himself of any trace of altruism can a person truly fulfill himself. Society at large can progress only when it is based on such individuals, each one striving to serve only himself (or herself).

Such an outlook can be hugely attractive to a certain kind of individual. It provides them with a philosophical justification for the extreme exercise of egoism, not giving a damn for anyone else.

Kroy, and of course Ben-Amotz, were religiously devoted to this new creed. (This is, of course, an oxymoron, since Ayn Rand was a total unbeliever, condemning any form of religion, including the Jewish religion of her parents.) When I caught Ben-Amotz doing something which could be construed as beneficial to others, he went to great lengths in justifying it by proving that in the long run it was to his own ultimate advantage.

Kroy himself was obviously a very disturbed being. At the age of 41, he committed suicide. I was not certain whether Ayn Rand disturbed his mind or whether he was attracted to her because he was disturbed to start with.

Ayn Rand was born as Alisa Zinovyevna Rosenbaum in Saint Petersburg, which later became Petrograd, which later became Leningrad. She was 12 years old when the Bolshevik revolution broke out in that city. The pharmacy of her parents was taken over by the regime, and the bourgeois family fled to the Crimea, which was held by White Russian forces. Later they returned to their native city, where Alisa studied philosophy and even published a book in Russian. In 1926 she reached the US, leaving her parents behind.

She adopted the name of Ayn (rhymes with "swine," as she herself was wont to explain). She probably took the word from the Hebrew, where it means "eye." The surname Rand may be a contraction of her original German-Jewish family name.

Her early history may in some measure explain her abiding hatred for Communism and any kind of collectivism, including social democracy, as well as any kind of religion or statism. For her, the state was the enemy of the free individual. This led her naturally to embrace an unbridled laissez faire capitalism (what Shimon Peres called "swinish capitalism") and to reject any form of welfare state or safety net.

All this was well structured in her philosophy, which was adopted by believers all over the world. She once called herself "the most creative thinker alive." On another occasion, she asserted that in all the annals of philosophy, there were only three great thinkers, all starting with an A: Aristotle, Aquinas and Ayn Rand.

She must have been an unabashed racist, too: during the 1973 Yom Kippur War she said that it was "civilized men fighting savages," comparing Israelis to the White Americans fighting the Red Indians.

No wonder that she posthumously became the darling of the Tea Party fanatics who are now dominating the Republican Party. And no wonder that Paul Ryan proudly cites her as one of his most important mentors. (Ayn Rand herself died in 1982 at age 77. Her funeral was attended by her devotees, including Alan Greenspan, one of the gravediggers of the US economy.)

There is something in the teachings of this Jewish White Russian preacher of extreme egoism that appeals to the primitive American myths of rugged individualism, gun-toting Wild West self-reliance, suspicion of the domination-hungry state (going back to King George the Third). But this is not the 18th century, for God's sake.

I never studied philosophy, though on my path I have picked up a few dozen books about it here and there. But Ayn Rand's theories always struck me as, well, juvenile.

There is a picture in my mind. The late Israeli writer Pinchas Sadeh described how once, as an adolescent, he had climbed a ladder in the library of his kibbutz, taken out a book of Nietzsche's and stood there, at the top of the ladder, for several hours, unable to stop reading. It was, I suppose, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, a dangerous book for young people. It also had a huge impact on Ayn Rand in her younger years.

Nietzsche castigates the "Jewish pity morality," which has infected the adorable "blond beasts." Compassion for the weak is a sin, because it blunts the capabilities of the strong, those on the way to becoming supermen. Which young person does not see themselves as a potential superman (or, I suppose, superwoman)?

When Dan Ben-Amotz tried to convince me of the "rational egoism" of Ayn Rand, I countered with a simple argument: when I was wounded in 1948 and lay completely exposed to enemy fire, four soldiers of my squad came up and rescued me, risking their lives. Their egoism must have told them that this was an extremely silly thing to do. Risking their most precious possession -- their very lives -- for another human being was inexcusable according to Ayn Rand. They had nothing to gain from it. They had everything to lose.

I have seen in my life innumerable acts of altruism, large and small. Indeed, what is love, real love, but a pure form of altruism?

Sure, every person is, to some extent, an egoist. But every person is also, to some extent, an altruist. Human beings are social animals, their social instincts deeply imbedded in their nature. Without them, human society could not function.

I too was captured by Nietzsche in my youth. But "Jewish pity morality" won. That's why I, like many Israelis, cannot even begin to understand American social attitudes, as illustrated yet again in the present election campaign.

For us it is self-evident that the state has a duty to help the sick, the old, the children, the handicapped and the disadvantaged. An ancient saying goes "Israelis (meaning all the Jews) are responsible for each other." Long before the State of Israel was born, we already had a strong system of health insurance and social services. Social insurance, instituted in Germany by the right-wing politician Otto von Bismarck in Nietzsche's time, is for us Israelis self-evident.

Binyamin Netanyahu is an American-style Republican, a strong supporter of Mitt Romney. He has done incalculable damage to the Israeli social net, both as Finance Minister and as Prime Minister. But not even he would advertise himself as a disciple of Ayn Rand. He has, however, one thing in common with Paul Ryan: both are pushed forward and financed by Sheldon Adelson.

I can think of no purer personification of Ayn Rand's vision than this Casino billionaire. She would have adored him. He is the perfect egoist. He has become super-rich by exploiting the pitiful addiction of weak human beings. His business practices have been questioned. Yet even here there is some room for doubt: does Adelson spend hundreds of millions on people like Romney, Ryan and Netanyahu only to further his own business interests? Or do we detect even here a trace of altruism, a desire to fulfill his national and social visions, objectionable as they may be?

Since Ayn Rand was an atheist and abhorred anything that was not purely rational, while the Tea Party is strictly religious (never mind what religion), Ryan is now compelled to distance himself from his mentoress, who was also a militant advocate of abortion.

Actually, I don't believe in either the intellectual prowess or the political honesty of the man. He looks to me slightly phoney. I am not sure that Ayn Rand would have liked him either. If only Gary Cooper could play him, he might look more convincing.

20120826-04	06:55	SteveB	From the Right: "Homeland Security Prepares for Civil War"
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What is this???

But, of course, America's police would never shoot innocent citizens!

"Homeland Security Prepares for Civil War" by Jack Swint, OpEdNews

Aug. 21, 2012, (<http://www.opednews.com/articles/Homeland-Security-s-Intent-by-Jack-Swint-120821-433.html>)

(It's clear our military is no longer the nation's only standing army when it comes to killing power.)

Over the past 2 weeks, everyone from the mainstream media to bloggers and conspiracy theorists have questioned the government's mass purchasing of ammunition for federal agencies like the National Weather Service and even the Social Security Administration. Combined, both agencies ordered over 210,000 rounds. This ammunition is mostly made up of "hollow point" bullets, which are designed strictly for maximum damage to the human body and have been outlawed for use in warfare since 1969.

On the surface, these purchases alone are scary enough and raise questions as to why these unlikely agencies need any amounts of ammo, especially bullets that have been outlawed. The National Weather Service claims they have 63 officers who "enforce the nation's ocean and fishing laws to ensure a level playing field for fishermen and to protect marine species like whales, dolphins and turtles." If you divide 46,000 rounds by the 63 agents they employ, that's 730 bullets per agent, or, in other words, 63 crack shots and a lot of dead fisherman.

The Social Security Administration (SSA) has given no specific response to questions regarding their purchase of 174,000 rounds. They said their "agents' need them. But, keep this in mind: the SSA only deals with US Citizens in America. The SSA has never been involved with anything outside of this country for any reason. And what do they need with armed agents? All SSA offices employ private contracted security for their offices.

Digging deeper into the government's recent procurements for ammo, you learn just how aggressively they are buying up ridiculous amounts of ammo and riot related equipment. The feds have actually ordered over 1 billion rounds of ammo in 2012 alone. They received 750,000,000 in March and are awaiting another 450,000,000 arriving soon. All in conjunction with large-scale orders for riot gear, bulletproof checkpoint outposts with red and green stoplights, human shaped paper practice targets, and other crowd control and containment equipment.

There is no conspiracy theory here. The federal government is expecting either a catastrophic financial collapse that could provoke nationwide food riots and all out civil unrest, another civil war, or even Armageddon. All in the very near future. Some theorize that the mass purchase of ammunition is an attempt to hoard as much as possible from the American public whom the feds believe may be in preparation for civil war right now.

Activist, radio talk show and journalist, Madison Ruppert, recently detailed on his "End The Lie Radio Show" how our Department of Homeland Security has an apparent obsession with buying up all the ammunition on earth. He noted that even if this ammo were purchased strictly for training purposes, as the Feds claim, we simply do not have the money in the federal budget to buy hundreds of millions of rounds of high dollar ammunition for domestic agents' target practice.

Another recent story by Ruppert entitled, "We Are Preparing For Massive Civil War...Says DHS Informant" outlines investigator Doug Haggman's interview with reportedly, high-level, reliable sources inside Homeland Security, who claim the agency is preparing for a massive civil war in America. The DHS source states that the federal government foresees and prepares for a massive civil revolt. "Every time you hear about troop movements, military equipment, the militarization of the police, and the buying of the ammunition in the US, all of this is orchestrated by the DHS who are reportedly preparing for a massive uprising."

Hagmann goes on to say that his sources tell him the concerns of the DHS stem from their belief in an impending collapse of the U.S. dollar as the the world's primary reserve currency, and their fear that a significant portion of the population is already armed and will rise up over the crash of our monetary system. Hagmann's sources confirmed the ongoing fear of a U.S. dollar collapse at the hands of the Chinese and possibly the Russians in retaliation for aggressive U.S. foreign policy initiatives against Chinese and Russian strategic allies like Iran and Syria.

"The one source that we have, I've known since 1979," says Hagmann. "He started out as a patrol officer and currently he is now working for a federal agency under the umbrella of the Department of Homeland Security. He's in a position to know what policies are being initiated and what policies are being planned at this point." And, "he's telling us right now that what you're seeing is just the tip of the iceberg."

"We are preparing, we, meaning the government, we are preparing for a massive civil war in this country."

Then there is Trends Research Institutes' Founder Gerald Celente's forecast of last year where he believes and expects a collapse of the U.S. dollar and riots in America some time this year. Since Celente's "Civil War" prediction of last year, President Obama signed executive orders known as the National Defense Resources Preparedness, which are politically damaging actions taken by a sitting president. Of course, he also signed the National Defense Authorization Act, abolishing habeas corpus and the Bill of Rights, and permitting indefinite detention without charge or trial of American citizens at home and abroad. He further claims the power to murder American citizens without indictment, trial or conviction upon his finding that they support or substantially assist an enemy of the United States or one of its allies. Let the firing squads begin.

And most recently, additional requests made by the DHS for another procurement of 750 million rounds of hollow-point ammunition only fuels speculation of an upcoming tragic event expected on American soil. These major events, as shocking to the American people as they are, will be taking place during an election year.

How seriously does the government consider a Tea Party rebellion? Kevin Benson, a retired U.S. Army colonel, who now teaches modern warfare to soldiers at the University of Foreign Military and Cultural Studies at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, has co-written an article with Civil War expert, Jennifer Weber, detailing how to crush a Tea Party insurgency. That report, by itself, has ignited a firestorm among those increasingly concerned about what they feel is a distinct anti-civilian tone that has infected much of the military and Homeland Security personnel since 2009.

Benson and Weber co-wrote the article for Small Wars Journal on a 2010 Army report entitled, "U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command, The Army Operating Concept 2016 - 2028."

The report describes the Army's response to threats "at home and abroad" in the coming two decades, and, in doing so, made clear that a monumental cultural shift recently occurred in the thinking of those at the top levels of military command. This shift has some governmental watchdogs worried, particularly given that Benson is using the platform provided at Fort Leavenworth to indoctrinate soldiers in his vision of the nature of modern warfare in America.

Benson and Webber actually created a fictitious training scenario, including a military response, as a teaching tool for the future insurrection of tea party activists. As the scenario goes, the tea party stages a takeover of the town of Darlington, S.C.. They profess that the Declaration of Independence has been re-imposed, and the local government declared null and void. According to the vision articulated by Benson, the enemy will be average citizens whose values resonate with those articulated by the tea party.

The scenario admits to the public that the government fears that the Tea Party can alter or abolish an existing government and replace it with another. In the words of Benson's report, a takeover by the Tea Party will have an effect on the general population inasmuch as it "shall seem most likely to effect their safety and happiness."

Also, there is a 2008 report produced by the U.S. Army War College's Strategic Institute that warns the United States might experience massive civil unrest in the wake of a series of crises, which it termed "strategic shock." It goes on to say, "widespread civil violence inside the United States would force the defense establishment to reprioritize itself to defend basic domestic order and human security." The report, authored by Retired Lt. Col. Nathan Freir, adds that the military may be needed to squash "purposeful domestic resistance."

Even though Freir's warning does not directly cite the Tea Party as the cause of the mass civil unrest, the inference is there. With the publication of the reports by Frier, Benson and Weber, it is clear that DHS and the U.S. Army considers it a valid proposition to assume that a future civil war will be sparked not by extremist Islamists with dirty bombs or left wing insurrectionists, but by the tea party and the conservatives who participate in it.

Just three years ago the Department of Homeland Security generated the notorious Home Grown Terrorist Assessment Memorandum detailing the the vision the DHS held of the primary threats to U.S. domestic security in

the near future. The memo was distributed to local law enforcement across the nation with details about the Tea Party being the object of the government's fears. The fears included combat hardened returning veterans to a nation without jobs for them, weapons and ammunition shortages that could be blamed upon the federal government, citizens who believe there is an effort to build an international government, extremist internet chatters who perceive a loss of U.S. manufacturing and construction jobs to overseas markets and blame governmental policies for that exodus and resultant home foreclosures, libertarians, Ron Paul supporters, people who talk a lot about their constitutional rights, people with copies of the constitution or Bill of Rights, etc., are all suspected domestic terrorists according to the memo.

Why Hollow Point Bullets?

After being bombarded with questions wanting to know why the feds are procuring stockpiles of ammo, their half-hearted excuses came down to needing this ammo for training and qualification purposes. That answer only raises more questions. Like, why does anyone need to practice or qualify with expensive "hollow point" rounds. Manufacturers make "practice" rounds that are considerably cheaper.

According to an article published by war decorated Army Major General Jerry Curry (Ret), the feds explanation about the bullets fails to pass the smell test. **"Hollow point bullets are so lethal that the Geneva Convention does not allow their use on the battle field in time of war."** Hollow point bullets don't just stop or hurt people, they penetrate the body, spread out, fragment and cause maximum damage to the body's organs. Death often follows. "Notice that all of these purchases are for the deadly hollow nose bullets. These bullets are not being purchased and stored for squirrel or coyote hunting.

"This is serious ammunition manufactured to be used for serious purposes."

He goes on to write that "In the war in Iraq, our military forces expended approximately 70 million rounds per year. In March DHS ordered 750 million rounds of hollow point ammunition. It then turned around and ordered an additional 750 million rounds of miscellaneous bullets including some that are capable of penetrating walls."

His final claim is food for thought "This is enough ammunition to empty five rounds into the body of every living American citizen."

General Curry raises 3 additional good points.

1. We have enough military forces to maintain law and order in the U.S. even during times of civil unrest. We have local police, backed up by each state's National Guard, backed up by the Department of Defense.
2. In addition to all these forces, why does DHS need its own private army?
3. Why do the SSA, NOAA and other government agencies need to create their own civilian security forces armed with hollow nose bullets?

This is not a "conspiracy theory" or guessing that our government is actively stockpiling enormous amounts of lethal ammunition, riot equipment and other related control devices designed solely for civil unrest. This purchase is a fact, and there is plenty of documentation from the feds themselves on how they are procuring these items. It is readily available on the Internet. It is also evident that within the last few years, several military strategists have produced in depth reports outlining the probability for a massive Civil War in America in the near future.

The DHS and other federal agencies are aggressively acting on those reports and recommendations by launching their own preparedness plans in order to both conduct a pre-emptive strike first and or combat any uprising by civilians that may occur first.

These ammo purchases by the feds do not include any mention of "non-lethal" tactics such as rubber bullets, water hoses, bean bags (fired from a shotgun to knock a person down) or tear gas, etc., which are used instead of deadly force to control civil unrest. It appears on the surface that they are gearing up for all out warfare on the American

public. It also appears that the entity behind this plan is the Department of Homeland Security, not the military or local city, county, state or federal law enforcement.

The below analogy will likely anger some of the people reading it. It is only being used to point out how agencies akin to Homeland Security can get out of hand and allow self-appointed power and authority to become grossly abused, thus losing sight of their intent and objective.

In our own fears from 911, our government created Homeland Security, an agency that has become so powerful and relentless in believing they are protecting America that they have evolved into nothing more than what the German Waffen -"SS' officers became over time. Out of control. The "SS' were first formed in 1934 only as a supplementary army alongside the main German army. But, in just a few years, they were able to appoint themselves into the core of Germany's terror apparatus and by about 1936 assumed control of the entire terror machine.

20120826-07 09:01 Beth Re: "Homeland Security Prepares for Civil War" (reply to SteveB, above)

Nonsense. That's what it is!

20120826-08 10:58 Art Re: "Homeland Security Prepares for Civil War" (reply to SteveB, above)

Think this one may need a bit more research.

20120826-10 11:15 Ben Re: "Homeland Security Prepares for Civil War" (reply to SteveB, above)

174,000 / 41 = a bit over 4000 rounds per location.

I shot well over 10,000 rounds a year by myself, just practicing, the first couple years I was shooting regularly. Rising ammo prices have forced me to cut back considerably.

For practice, the amount of ammo for which SSA requested a bid is not unreasonable. It might also suffice to defend a regional office for a few hours. Maybe.

It's certainly not enough to contain widespread insurrection or stop a civil war.

I seem to recall to responding something very like this a couple years ago, but am too lazy to look. It didn't have the Tea Party label, then, but as I think I said at the time, it's the whacko ultra right that I fear, anyway.

<http://www.snopes.com/politics/guns/ssabullets.asp>

20120826-13 11:28 Pam Re: "Homeland Security Prepares for Civil War" (reply to SteveB, above)

Is this a reliable source? Even I, with my jittery nerves, find this hard to believe.

20120826-14 12:03 Clark Re: "Homeland Security Prepares for Civil War" (reply to Pam, above)

It's not properly sourced. No evidence of the government buy-up of ammunition. Maybe it's true, maybe it isn't, but let's see sources.

BTW, this story dates from May, not August, for what it's worth.

It wouldn't particularly surprise me if the DHS were creating contingency plans for civil war/insurrection etc. That's what government bureaucracies with too much time/money on their hands do, and anyway, you have to prepare for anything that might happen whether you believe it will or not. Beyond that it doesn't mean much. Unfortunately we'll never be able to get rid of the DHS because no one wants to be accused of being soft on terrorism if there's an attack.

The notion that China, heavily invested in the US, would want the dollar to collapse is laughable.

The threat of right-wing domestic terrorism does seem real enough to me, The real crazies are on the right, not the left, these days.

Right now all this doesn't add up to much.

20120826-06	07:59	Dennis	"Does Paul Ryan Know What's in His Budget?"
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Ryan's going-out-of-business budget...

"Does Paul Ryan Know What's in His Budget?" by Dean Baker, Yahoo! Finance/The Exchange

Aug. 17, 2012, (<http://finance.yahoo.com/blogs/the-exchange/baker-does-paul-ryan-know-budget-185617687.html>)

If the news media had to work for a living, this is what they would all be asking right now. The reason is simple. The projections the Congressional Budget Office (CBO) made for Representative Ryan's budget imply that he literally wants to shut down the federal government.

His budget implies that after three decades the federal government will have no money to spend on health research, education, highways, airports, and other infrastructure, the Food and Drug Administration and most other activities that we associate with the federal government. His budget has money for Social Security, Medicare and other health programs and the Defense Department. That's it.

This is not a vicious anti-Ryan attack coming from hyper-partisan Democrats. This is what the analysis of his budget by the non-partisan CBO shows. It's right there in the fifth row of Table 2:

http://www.cbo.gov/sites/default/files/cbofiles/attachments/03-20-Ryan_Specified_Paths_2.pdf.

The table shows that in 2040, Representative Ryan would allot an amount equal to 4.75 percent of GDP to all these other areas of government including defense spending. By 2050, Ryan's allocation for these areas, including defense, falls to 3.75 percent of GDP.

The defense budget is currently a bit over 4.0 percent of GDP. Ryan has indicated that he would like to maintain or even increase this level of spending. The arithmetic is then straightforward. **In 2040, Ryan would leave less than 0.75 percent of GDP for areas of spending that currently require more than five times this amount. In 2050, all these areas of spending would literally have to be zeroed out as defense spending will take up every cent and more that Ryan has left in his budget.**

It is important to understand that CBO tried to accurately present the implications of the budget that Representative Ryan gave them. CBO works for Congress. These are career civil servants. They cannot be easily fired, but if CBO's staff deliberately misrepresented a budget proposal from a powerful member of Congress like Paul Ryan, that is the sort of thing that could get them put out on the street.

The way CBO would typically analyze a proposal is that they would sit down with Representative Ryan and his staff and determine as closely as possible the outlines of the budget he is proposing. They would then produce projections which would be shown to Ryan and his staff to ensure that they had accurately represented his

proposed budget. CBO would only publish a document with these projections after Representative Ryan and his staff had a chance to review them and agreed that they had accurately represented his proposal.

This means that there can be no accident here. CBO did not blindside Representative Ryan with a half-baked analysis they did in the middle of the night. We can safely assume that the projections from CBO do in fact represent the budget proposal as presented to them by Representative Ryan and his staff.

This leaves the obvious question. Is he serious? Does Representative Ryan really think it is a good idea to end the federal government's role in building and maintaining infrastructure, in financing education, in funding basic research in health care and other areas, in maintaining our national parks, federal courts, the FBI? His budget says that this is what he thinks, since these services will not be provided for free (FBI agents expect to get paid), but it is difficult to believe that a politician running for national office would really want to eliminate most of the government.

Anyhow, this is the most basic question that reporters should be asking Representative Ryan now that Governor Romney has selected him as his vice presidential candidate. We know that they all have to run stories about his high school friends and his college courses, but the public has a right to know where he stands on the policy issues that he has put at the center of his political agenda.

If reporters do their job, they have a simple question to put to Mr. Ryan. "Your budget would put an end to everything the government does, except for Social Security, health care and defense. Is this really what you want to do?"

[20120826-09](#)

11:02

Art

Re: "Does Paul Ryan Know What's in His Budget?" (reply to Dennis, above) & "Five Myths About Paul Ryan's Budget"

To me the more I look at the "Ryan Budget:" the squishier it becomes. It doesn't address the deficit and it doesn't really do anything by implement social re-engineering, to quote Mr. Gingrich. Good article today in WP about the 5 myths of the Ryan Budget.

"Five Myths About Paul Ryan's Budget" by Peter Orszag, *The Washington Post*

Aug. 23, 2012, (http://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/five-myths-about-paul-ryans-budget/2012/08/23/757b3718-eba0-11e1-a80b-9f898562d010_story.html)

I've worked closely with Rep. Paul Ryan. He's an honest and amiable guy. In part because of his winning personality, Ryan, Mitt Romney's running mate in the presidential election, has convinced many in Washington that his budget blueprint is a serious proposal for solving our long-term fiscal problems. Unfortunately, it's not. Let's dig into the asterisks of Ryan's plan and unearth the fine print.

1. Paul Ryan's budget would reduce the deficit.

The Ryan budget is a Potemkin village: It looks good from afar but is just a facade. The Congressional Budget Office has estimated that the plan would cut the public debt almost in half as a share of the economy by 2040. Sounds good, right?

Take a closer look, and you'll see that the Ryan budget rests on three pillars that rely on capping and punting — limiting spending to a certain level but providing no specifics on how to achieve that number.

First, federal Medicaid spending is currently forecast to double by 2040, from 2 percent of gross domestic product to 4 percent. Under Ryan's budget, it is projected to be cut in half over that period. This dramatic turnaround will supposedly occur by turning Medicaid over to the states through block grants. Anyone want to bet that will work? If states can't find huge efficiencies in Medicaid, expect them to pressure the federal government to avoid the fanciful reductions in federal support assumed in the Ryan budget.

Second, the Wisconsin congressman has specified \$4.5 trillion in tax cuts, counting on massive rollbacks of tax breaks — such as the mortgage interest deduction — to pay for them. But he offers no details as to how to achieve such reductions, and most serious tax analysts don't think such changes are politically feasible.

Third, Ryan assumes that other spending, including nondefense discretionary spending, will fall from more than 12 percent of GDP last year to less than 5 percent by 2040. Again, he provides scant details on how to get there.

If you take out everything Ryan is assuming and look at his concrete proposals, his budget is not fiscally conservative. Without the magical reductions in Medicaid, other spending and tax breaks, his plan would expand the deficit in 2040, not reduce it.

2. The Ryan budget would help the middle class.

Ryan says he would cut tax rates for all families, but that doesn't mean the middle class would be any better off. Even after the Bush tax cuts, Ryan's reductions would amount to about \$1,000 a year for families with annual incomes between \$50,000 and \$75,000— compared with a cut of more than \$250,000 a year for those with incomes above \$1 million.

Ryan says he would pay for these cuts by broadening the tax base, which means scaling back tax breaks. But he is also committed to maintaining low taxes on capital gains, a bigger source of income for wealthier people. Most of the other big tax breaks — such as the mortgage interest deduction, state and local tax deductibility, and pension and health tax benefits — help the middle class.

So any attempt to broaden the tax base without raising taxes on capital income would almost inevitably place a higher burden on middle-class families. And if those middle-class tax breaks were not slashed to pay for Ryan's high-income tax cuts, other spending would have to be reduced further or the deficit would spiral — either of which would also hurt the middle class.

Furthermore, unlike the proposal from the nonpartisan Domenici-Rivlin deficit-reduction commission, the Ryan budget does not include any provisions to create jobs immediately. With unemployment above 8 percent, we should couple any long-term deficit reduction with additional support for the economy today. That would help the middle class more than promises of a tax cut that will probably turn out to be a mirage.

3. Ryan's proposal would cut health-care spending by reforming Medicare.

Ryan says his plan would reduce health-care spending by increasing competition, but reality doesn't remotely match his rhetoric. The CBO analyzed Ryan's 2011 budget proposal, which would over time move Medicare entirely to private plans, and found that it would significantly increase total health-care spending (that is, spending by the government and Medicare beneficiaries).

"Both administrative costs (including profits) and payment rates to providers are higher for private plans than for Medicare," the report said. That effect, according to the CBO, would outweigh any savings achieved by people choosing less costly health care.

Ryan's supporters argue that the most recent version of his proposal, which would retain traditional Medicare but expand the role of private plans, would have different results. The CBO has not fully evaluated this proposal. But how could moving entirely to private plans be hugely costly, while moving partially to private plans would save lots of money?

Besides, the plan is similar to what we already have: Almost 30 percent of Medicare beneficiaries are also enrolled in Medicare Advantage, which offers private plans alongside the federal program. The evidence suggests that these plans cost more than traditional Medicare, once you take into account their ability to skim off the least costly beneficiaries. So much for Ryan's health-care-competition tooth fairy.

4. Ryan's plan would provide certainty to the markets and the economy.

Ryan likes to highlight the job-killing effects of uncertainty, but his budget would exacerbate it. Corporate executives hold back on investment and hiring when they don't know what will happen next in terms of government policy. From that perspective, uncertainty is created when specifics are unknown — just like in Ryan's plan.

How would tax deductions be rolled back? How would the block-granting of Medicaid work, and what happens if it doesn't? What programs would be cut to hit Ryan's spending targets? All of these are huge questions. Leaving them unanswered does nothing to reduce uncertainty.

5. If Romney wins, Ryan's budget will be his fiscal blueprint.

Differences between Romney's budget proposal and Ryan's are already emerging, most prominently the fact that Ryan's plan would retain the Medicare savings included in the Affordable Care Act, but Romney's would not.

More fundamentally, if the Romney-Ryan ticket wins, their administration would probably have to choose one or two of the big three items: tax reform, Medicare changes or block-granting Medicaid.

Among the three, I'd bet on Medicaid, given how difficult the other two goals are. The fact that the harm from block-granting would be concentrated on the poor, and that Congress would get to leave it to governors to impose the pain, sadly makes that change more politically viable than the others.

This worth a look if nothing else just for the music. (Beckie and I caught an ABBA concert (new Swedish group called Waterloo - surprise) last week at Wolf Trap - indoor/out door local arena. It was packed with geriatrics dancing in the aisles. Sudden influx of hip and knee surgeries reported the following week.)

Hmmm, I thought only southern American rednecks knew how to make fast cars. Wrong again.

"The Most Expensive Luxury Car in the World" by *International Business Times*

June 27, 2011, (<http://www.ibtimes.com/articles/170140/20110627/porsche-lamborghini-mercedes-ferrari-mclaren-bugatti.htm#page0>)

Bugatti Veyron \$1,700,000

The Bugatti Veyron is the fastest accelerating car on the market today - it can go from 0-60 in 2.5 seconds. It is also the fastest street legal car, reaching a top speed of 267 mph. The final in an exclusive production run of 300 units was sold to an unidentified European customer this month.



Justin Howard, looking like a Viking warrior in his leather tunic, gives an energetic performance, including sliding across the stage barelegged. (http://edition.cnn.com/2012/08/25/living/gallery/air-guitar-contest/index.html?hpt=hp_c2)



The taxpayers are sending congressmen on expensive trips abroad. It might be worth it except they keep coming back.

-Will Rogers



Balance...

<http://errorpicture.blogspot.com/2011/04/breathtaking-balanced-rock-formations.html>



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

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FRIENDS OF THE MIDDLE NEWSLETTER #213 — AUG. 28, 2012

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

INDEX: Click here.

2012: What America Has Come To

(posted by Steven W. Baker / SteveB, Aug. 28, 2012)

"Americans still believe in an America where anything's possible — they just don't think their leaders do."—Barack Obama

"The United States in 2012: A Status Update for the Country" by Christopher S. Rugaber, AP

Aug. 26, 2012, (http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/08/25/america-2012-status_n_1830159.html?ir=Business)



(WASHINGTON) We're heavier in pounds and hotter by degrees than Americans of old. We're starting to snub our noses at distant suburbs after generations of burbs in our blood. Our roads and bridges are kind of a mess. There are many more poor, and that's almost sure to get worse.

The oddly American obsession with picking up and moving on — "this spectacle of so many lucky men restless in the midst of abundance," as Alexis de Tocqueville noted nearly 200 years ago — has given way to the un-American activity of going nowhere. But check back tomorrow.

Such swirling changes are not fodder for a State of the Union speech, but they are part of the state of the union nonetheless, on the eve of the Republican National Convention that convenes briefly Monday with the full schedule starting Tuesday, and the Democratic convention that follows it a week later. The country that President Barack Obama and Mitt Romney are vying to lead for the next four years is not quite the same as the one four years ago, not nearly the same as the one further back in time.

Our taste for McMansions, for example, has slightly soured in recent years in favor of more affordable abodes.

We, like, speak differently than our forebears, new twists on the same tongue. LOL.

Soldiers are flowing home from the wars; this is almost what peace looks like.

A paint-by-the-numbers portrait:

WHERE WE LIVE

Like much else, where we live is shaped by how — or whether — we make a living. But larger forces than that seem to be at work in determining Americans' chosen places.

U.S. cities and closely surrounding areas are experiencing more growth than farther-off suburbs for the first time in at least 20 years. The cost and bother of commuting are part of the reason. The average commuter spends over 30 hours stuck in traffic per year, says the Texas Transportation Institute, up from 14 hours in 1982. That's the time spent going nowhere or at a crawl.

As well, city life is becoming the choice of more young and old people, as the attractions and convenience rival the long-held American dream of affordable home ownership, which usually means farther out.

Meantime, the historic migration of Southern blacks to the North has reversed, with black populations rising in Southern cities and suburbs, especially among the more affluent.

But the overarching recent development in where we live is that we aren't moving much at all.

Mobility is the lowest it's been in the 60 years it has been tracked by the Census Bureau, with only 11.6 percent of the nation's population moving in the past year. That's just over half the level in 1951, the biggest year for Americans on the move, 21.2 percent. More adult children are living with parents because of economic hardship, fewer older people are able to retire to sunny climes and the housing bust further contributed to locking the restless in place.

Average home size dropped 5 percent from 2007 to 2010, to a little under 2,400 square feet. It's still a far cry from the 750-square-foot, one-story, 2-bedroom Levittown prototypes that sparked the suburban boom and brought modest homes within reach of the masses after World War II.

Though they paved paradise and put up housing lots, the U.S. remains heavily treed. One-third of its land area is forested, a proportion that has been stable since the beginning of the past century. But after the devastation of American chestnuts that grew by the billions in Eastern forests and of the elms that gave so many towns an Elm Street, today's forests and urban greenery are not the same as in the past.

Meantime asphalt and iron have fallen into disrepair: Nearly one in four of the country's 605,086 bridges is rated deficient.

HOW WE COMMUNICATE

Until World War II in residential areas and well beyond in rural America, telephone party lines were common. If you wanted to make a phone call, you had to wait for Velma down the road to finish gossiping on the same line, interrupt the chitchat to ask her to hang up — or just cover the speaker and eavesdrop on the juicy details. (Velma was a popular name from the 1890s through the 1930s, then no more). In party-line days, a major technological advance came when Ma Bell developed distinct rings for different homes on the line, so everyone didn't pick up each time the phone jangled.

These days, the dedicated landline that took over from the party line is itself fading, as Americans' favorite gadget, the cellphone, spreads in numbers and smarts.

The number of people with wireless only and no traditional landline phone has grown fourfold since 2005, the government estimates. In 2005, less than 8 percent of adults lived in households with only wireless telephones. Now it's more than 32 percent. Nearly nine in 10 adults own a cell.

The day Obama's Democratic convention opened in 2008, Facebook announced its 100 millionth user, a benchmark it actually took longer to reach than its now-overshadowed rival, Myspace. Facebook is closing in on its billionth user, sitting with Twitter as kings of the social-media mountain until something else knocks them off.

WHO WE ARE

Fatter. The average woman has gained 18 pounds since 1990, to 160 pounds; the average man is up 16 pounds, to 196, Gallup found.

Poorer as a whole, but richer than during the recession. The value of people's homes, stocks and all other assets stood at \$62.9 trillion in March, the latest count, down from \$66 trillion before the economy tanked but up from \$51.3 trillion at the downturn's depths.

Indebted, but perhaps not up to the eyeballs. Credit card debt has declined about 14 percent since 2008. Americans also have less mortgage debt, but more student debt and auto loans. The savings rate, meantime, climbed to 4.2 percent last year, a big improvement from 1.5 percent in 2005. But then there is the government. It is indebted past the eyeballs.

Hotter: The period from July 2011 to June 2012 was the warmest 12-month stretch on record. Altogether, the contiguous states posted an annual all-season average temperature of 56 degrees in that period, which is 3.3 degrees hotter than either of the years that Obama and Romney were born. The hottest calendar year on record for the U.S. is 1998, at 55.08 degrees, but that may not last this year's swelter and lack of winter. Most of the past 15 years have been among the steamiest on the books, and all 15 were hotter than Romney's birth year, 1947, and Obama's, 1961.

More numerous. The U.S. has 314 million people. The country surpassed 200 million in 1968 and 300 million in 2006.

More diverse. For the first time, more than half the children born in the U.S. are racial or ethnic minorities, and by 2040 or several years after, non-Hispanic whites are expected to become a minority of the population. Along with this trend has come a historic jump in interracial marriages, which now make up an estimated 8.4 percent of marriages, up from 3.2 percent in 1980.

Addicted to texting. Cellphone users sent an average of 13 text messages a day in December 2008, double the number from a year earlier, the government said. More recently, Pew researchers found the average teen sent more than 64 texts a day.

Older. Between 2000 and 2010, the population of people aged 45 to 64 grew by close to one-third as the baby boom generation and those behind it grayed. That has helped to push the median age to 37.2 — half the population younger than that, half over.

A lot of those young people are named Sophia, the top girl's name for the first time, and Jacob, No. 1 choice for boys for the past 13 years. So long Mary and James, the dominant names over 100 years.

WHAT WE THINK

On the issues of the day, the economy has no near rival atop the list of concerns. Pocketbook matters often rule but Americans were heavily focused on war in the early going of the last campaign. As the recession deepened, though, and now with troops coming home, it's been the economy plain and simple — the issue ranked important by more than 9 in 10 respondents to an AP-GfK poll out this past week.

About half of us approve of the job Obama is doing, the poll found. About half disapprove. Voters are about evenly split on the race, and among those who lean to one man or the other, very few are open to changing their minds. Obama's years-ago vision of a nation of united states soaring above the divisions of red states and blue states seems a pipe dream in a fractious time.

The sharp lines and stagnant views are evident in public opinion on gun laws, abortion, health care, taxes and the federal budget deficit — on which polling has long shown wide divergence. The Pew Research Center reports that partisan polarization on basic policy questions is at its highest point in 25 years.

One exception has been support for gay marriage. In May of 2008 as Obama was wrapping up the Democratic nomination, just 40 percent of Americans told Gallup's pollsters same-sex marriages should be recognized by the law as valid. This May, 50 percent said yes to the same question, the most striking shift in social attitudes during Obama's presidency. Still, more than 30 states have passed measures against it and it's frequently a losing issue at the ballot box. There are no united states on this question.

Polarization doesn't stop at politics or policy, either. It appears to be embedded in personal relationships. A pre-convention Washington Post-Kaiser Family Foundation poll found Democrats and Republicans tend to be surrounded by fellow partisans — two-thirds of their friends and family share their party leanings.

Many of us belong to tribes tinted red or blue.

WHAT WE EARN

Few could have seen it coming back when Bill Clinton was scrambling to salvage his presidency from the Monica Lewinsky business, but his later years in office are starting to look like one of the economy's golden ages. Unemployment was low, the government miraculously took in what it spent and the stock market marched steadily upward, at least until the bubble burst.

Household income peaked in 1999, at \$53,252 in today's dollars, and has declined since, to \$49,445 in 2010. That puts households back to where they were in the mid-1990s.

But an even bigger rewind to an earlier time seems to be happening with the poor.

In July, The Associated Press found a broad consensus among economists and scholars that the official poverty rate is on track to reach its highest level in nearly half a century, erasing distinct — if modest — gains from the 1960s "war on poverty" that expanded the safety net with the introduction of Medicaid, Medicare and other social welfare programs.

The wealth gap between younger and older has grown into an unprecedented divide. Older people always have more net worth than younger adults on average, but now those 65 and over have 47 times more than adults under 35. It used to be only 10 times more, a quarter-century ago.

Overall, the value of goods and services produced in the country has returned to pre-recession levels, though with 5 million fewer people working. That makes the U.S. more productive and competitive. But when combined with meager income gains during that time, it also suggests we're working harder for roughly the same pay.

WHAT WE PAY

Housing prices have dropped by a striking 34 percent since late 2006. That's good if — only if — you're buying.

Tuition is up 15 percent at four-year public universities and almost 10 percent at private four-year institutions from 2008 to 2010.

Gas? It's a rollercoaster. The U.S. saw 91 cents a gallon only 13 years ago, during Clinton's presidency. The average price hit \$2 in May 2004, \$4 in June 2008, then plunged before that year's election, spiked and rollercoasted along, sitting now at \$3.74 a gallon.

In 2008, workers paid an average of \$3,354 for a year's worth of job-based health insurance, more than double their cost from nine years earlier, the Kaiser Family Foundation reported. In 2011, that average grew to \$4,129. Not only did premiums rise, but many more workers were picking up the first \$1,000 or more of health care costs as deductibles grew and employers shifted more health costs to employees.

WHO WE WERE

Norman Rockwell's America may have come and gone, if it ever existed, but the much younger nation de Tocqueville, the French philosopher, saw in his 1830s travels is still recognizable in its older age. For all the new colors, bold strokes of the past still show.

Want some age-old perspective on why Republicans fought Obama's health care law up to the Supreme Court this year? De Tocqueville wrote: "There is hardly a political question in the United States which does not sooner or later turn into a judicial one."

Both a scold and admirer, he found Americans obsessed with money, tending to "move forward by sudden impulses and short-lived efforts," quick to form agitating associations, reveling in an "always moving scene," loving change because it "seems to give birth only to miracles," and apt to rise from their stitched-from-many-nations roots to light up the world.

You'll hear lots about change if you tune into the conventions. To be seen: whether we still believe in miracles.

(Associated Press writers Jennifer C. Kerr, Seth Borenstein and Hope Yen, and Deputy Director of Polling Jennifer Agiesta contributed to this report.)



Even if we can't win the election (though I don't believe that), maybe we can stop the hypocrisy.

"I Didn't Write This" by Alan Colmes, FOX/Huffington Post

Aug. 27, 2012, (http://www.huffingtonpost.com/alan-colmes/romney-republican-convention_b_1834278.html?utm_hp_ref=politics)

Mitt Romney, when you stand on that \$2.5 million stage in Tampa to accept the nomination, the one being built to make you look likeable, remember, you didn't build that. Your fine-tailored suits that signal your business success -- the threads that you bought with some of the money you deigned to keep in America -- remember, you didn't sew that. In fact, that business success at Bain Capital wasn't your success. You know the government that you claim should get out of the way so entrepreneurs can flourish? You used it to become a multi-millionaire.

When Bain started Environmental Data Resources of Milford, Connecticut, in 1994, it did so with the help of a \$500,000 state fund. And that was on top of another \$500,000 Connecticut had already invested in the firm from the state's Innovations agency. Victor Budnick, who ran the agency, said you got a better deal from the state than you could have received from private investors. In fact, one of the selling points your company made to government agencies was that Bain companies that received government largess got an average return of 88% through the end of 1999. Government is good, no?

When another Bain company, Leiner Health, relocated to York County, South Carolina, the government induced the move with worker training, upgrades to public roads, water and sewer facilities, and tax breaks, and a 43% cut by the county in property tax assessment. Bain bought GS Steel in 1993 for \$75 million, but with only \$8 million of its own money. But Mitt Romney, you didn't buy that company. It was made possible, in part, because of a \$3 million tax break courtesy of Kansas City. When the company went under, so did the \$3 million subsidy that could not be used for the citizens of that community.

These practices don't quite match up with the campaign speech where you decry the "endless subsidies and credits intended to shape behavior in our economic society," and denounce government "intrusion in the workings of the free marketplace itself." But that's okay, Mr. Romney, because that speech -- you didn't write that. Lindsay Hayes, your director of speech writing, puts words in your mouth, even if they sound better coming out of it than Hays's words did when she wrote for Sarah Palin.

You know that man standing next to you on the stump, the one they say could be your sixth son? Yes, Paul Ryan, the vice presidential nominee. You didn't choose him. He was forced upon you by a right-wing base that you couldn't satisfy on your own. Oh, and he didn't make it on his own, either. That college education that prepared him for success was paid for by Social Security survivor benefits, part of a program he wants to dismantle. And his family wealth was obtained because of the company his great grandfather started, Ryan Incorporated Central, that received government contracts for roads, railroads, and part of what is now Chicago's O'Hare Airport. The company obtained at least 22 defense contracts, one of which, in 1996, was worth \$5.6 million. That family fortune that insured he never has to ever worry about the location of his next meal -- he didn't build that.

But the culmination of all that you've done is nigh upon us. Soon, you will be accepting the Republican Party nomination for president at the Tampa Bay Times Forum, an arena built with 62% government funds, a taxpayer gift of \$86 million. When that moment comes, chances are you won't be thinking about the "little people." After all, you recently remarked, "I don't give the bus driver credit for getting honor roll, I give the kid credit." Now, that's just dismissive of bus drivers, if not downright cruel. Maybe the kid had to take a school bus one day when his family's car elevator wasn't working. But please do think of one thing when you're basking in the glow of that \$2.5 million stage. Remember Governor, you didn't win the Republican nomination for president. Almost a dozen other Republicans, each taking his or her turn as the next "not Romney," lost it.

Sorry, Republicans. It's TAX CHEATS who are the problem...sort of like your Presidential candidate...

"Add It Up: Taxes Avoided by the Rich Could Pay Off the Deficit" by Paul Buchheit, NationofChange

Aug. 27, 2012, (<http://www.nationofchange.org/add-it-taxes-avoided-rich-could-pay-deficit-1346074084>)

Conservatives force the deficit issue, ignoring job creation, and insisting that tax increases on the rich wouldn't generate enough revenue to balance the budget. They're way off. But it takes a little arithmetic to put it all together. In the following analysis, data has been taken from a variety of sources, some of which may overlap or slightly disagree, but all of which lead to the conclusion that withheld revenue, not excessive spending, is the problem.

1. Individual and small business tax avoidance costs us \$450 billion.

The IRS estimates that 17 percent of taxes owed were not paid, leaving an underpayment of \$450 billion. In way of confirmation, an independent review of IRS data reveals that the richest 10 percent of Americans paid less than 19% on \$3.8 trillion of income in 2006, nearly \$450 billion short of a more legitimate 30% tax rate. It has also been estimated that two-thirds of the annual \$1.3 trillion in "tax expenditures" (tax subsidies from special deductions, exemptions, exclusions, credits, capital gains, and loopholes) goes to the top quintile of taxpayers. Based on IRS apportionments, this calculates out to more than \$450 billion for the richest 10 percent of Americans.

2. Corporate tax avoidance is between \$250 billion and \$500 billion.

There are numerous examples of tax avoidance by the big companies, but the most outrageous fact may be that corporations decided to drastically cut their tax rates after the start of the recession. After paying an average of 22.5% from 1987 to 2008, they've paid an annual rate of 10% since. This represents a sudden \$250 billion annual loss in taxes. Worse yet, it's a \$500 billion shortfall from the 35% statutory corporate tax rate.

3. Tax haven losses range from \$337 billion to \$500 billion.

The Tax Justice Network estimated in 2011 that \$337 billion is lost to the U.S. every year in tax haven abuse. It's probably more. A recent report placed total hidden offshore assets at somewhere between \$21 trillion and \$32 trillion. Using the lesser \$21 trillion figure, and considering that about 40% of the world's Ultra High Net Worth Individuals are Americans, and factoring in an annual 6% stock market gain based on historical records, the tax loss comes to \$500 billion.

[I believe the above figures apply to Mitt Romney's part, just by himself! –SteveB]

4. That's enough to pay off a trillion dollar deficit. Reasonable tax changes could pay it off a second time:

(a) A non-regressive payroll tax could produce \$150 billion in revenue.

Get ready for some math. The richest 10% made about \$3.84 trillion in 2006. A \$110,000 salary, which is roughly the cutoff point for payroll tax deductions, is also the approximate minimum income for the richest 10%. A 6.2% tax paid on \$1.43 trillion (\$110,000 times 13 million payees) is about \$90 billion. The lost taxes on the remaining \$2.41 trillion come to about \$150 billion.

(b) A minimal estate tax brings in another \$100 billion.

The 2009 estate tax, designed to impact only the tiny percentage of Americans with multi-million dollar estates that have never been taxed, returns about \$100 billion per year.

(c) A financial transaction tax (FTT): up to \$500 billion.

The Bank for International Settlements reported in 2008 that annual trading in derivatives had surpassed \$1.14 quadrillion (a thousand trillion dollars!). The Chicago Mercantile Exchange handles about 3 billion annual contracts worth well over 1 quadrillion dollars. One-tenth of one percent of a quadrillion dollars could pay off the deficit on its own.

More conservative estimates by the Center for Economic and Policy Research and the Chicago Political Economy Group suggest FTT revenues of a half-trillion dollars annually.

Add it all up, and we've paid off the deficit, almost twice. More importantly, the avoided taxes and a few other sensible taxes could provide sufficient revenue for job stimulus without cutting the hard-earned benefits of middle-class Americans.

20120827-03 14:33 Art Delusions

Trying to stay above the muck and continual to try to believe both sides have something besides racism and fundamentalism in their philosophy, the below may well cover the fundamental differences in how the two political groups see things. From the right's point of view, you're un-American if you don't see things this way. From the left's point of view these are all myths, because they have no factual basis, not because they love their country less.

Delusions:

1. Gun laws and gun deaths are unconnected.
2. Private enterprise is good; public enterprise is bad.
3. God created America and gave it a special purpose.
4. Our health-care system is the best there is.
5. The Founding Fathers were saintly figures who established liberty and democracy for everyone.
6. America is the greatest country in the world.
7. Tax rates are too high.
8. America is a peace-loving nation: the reason it gets involved in so many wars is that foreigners keep attacking us.
9. Cheap energy, gasoline especially, is our birthright.
10. Everybody else wishes they were American.

20120827-07 17:42 SteveB Re: Delusions (reply to Art, above)

I really like these, Art. Very distilled! These should be chunks of reality small and simple enough to grapple with, to discuss reasonably, to apply logic and human empathy to.

And I have no idea why it will be absolutely impossible to do that, but it will...it has proven to be impossible so far, at least.

Lord knows the subject of each is important, even crucial.

To come to grips with the truth or falsehood of these and very few other pivotal political axioms should be one of the major goals of both education and the political process in this country.

Given our rather large problems, you kinda have to ask yourself, why isn't this the case?

Why is it left to us amateurs? Doing what we pay the professionals to do, but they're too rapt-up in the power and money to do their jobs properly, or all those who are keep the others from functioning too, as in Mr. Obama's case, largely.

20120827-09 20:03 Pam Re: Delusions (reply to Art & SteveB, above)

I just listened to some clips of Romney commenting on global warming on NPR. His actual words. First he said he believed humans were contributing to climate change and we need to do something about it. Then he said he didn't know and thought spending trillions of dollars to cut greenhouse gasses was a bad idea. This man will say anything. How can people not see through this? I loved Chris Matthews' attack on Reince Priebus (what a name!) re. the race card. I just had dinner with my good conservative friend, who said, again, that the extremes on both sides make her crazy. I didn't say it, but what are the leftist extremists doing these days? I haven't noticed much hate speech coming from that quarter. I will be so glad when this election is over!--pam

Oh yeah. Remember when Hurricane Katrina was God's judgment on a sinful nation? What does Hurricane Isaac say about the Republican Convention? Jeesh!

20120827-11 21:31 SteveG Re: Delusions (reply to Pam, above)

I think it is intriguing/interesting that a man who or whom has been running for president for 6 years (at a minimum) has his staunch party supporters state that he is a private person and we just need to get to know him. Goodness gracious one would think he would have let us know him over the past 6 years, that is if he had nothing to hide, had the same beliefs then and now, did not flip flop at least once a day, etc.

Help me understand the change in welfare to work program through Obama's executive order. My understanding is that if a state had a different plan (a plan that would get the recipients to work quicker) the state could apply for and receive a waiver to the federal rules – creating smaller federal control and more states rights and getting people from welfare to work quicker. What did I miss? Why would the right wingers not want more state control & quicker movement to work?

Watch for the republican smirk – it will be everywhere this week.

20120827-13 22:48 Art Re: Delusions (reply to Pam, above)

I think Isaac is a message from Almighty God who has conjured up a mighty wind to blow away all the hate and viciousness of the Republican Party sinners.

How's that?

20120827-04 15:49 SteveB "George W. Bush as Hurricane Isaac"

WHERE IS GEORGE BUSH AT THE CONVENTION? NOT EVEN A MENTION OF HIS NAME!

If he was so great and Obama so bad, why is his name total sh*t???

The secret is out: even Republican know idiot Bush came within an inch of destroying the country!

Now they want us to elect another idiot?

"George W. Bush as Hurricane Isaac" by Robert Reich, Huffington Post

Aug. 27, 2012, (<http://www.huffingtonpost.com/robert-reich/george-w-bush-as-hurricane-bush-as-hurricane-isaac.html>)

There is nothing Republicans would rather the American people forget more than George W. Bush, who doesn't even have a bit-part at the GOP convention opening today in Tampa.

But W's ghost may be there, anyway.

The National Weather Service says tropical storm Isaac is now heading for New Orleans, and Isaac is projected to become a Category 1 hurricane by the time it makes landfall late Monday or early Tuesday.

Isaac is very likely to revive memories of the Bush administration's monumental incompetence in dealing with the needs of Americans caught in Hurricane Katrina.

And if the public remembers the Bush administration's incompetence with Katrina, they may also recall that administration's lies about weapons of mass destruction in Iraq -- which led us into that devastating war.

And the public may recall how George W. Bush took the \$5 billion surplus Bill Clinton bequeathed to him and turned it into a \$6 trillion budget deficit by slashing taxes, mostly on the rich, and by creating an expensive new Medicare drug benefit that helped insurance companies more than it helped seniors.

The public might even recall how the Bush administration tried not to see what Wall Street was up to when the Street went on a rampage of risky bets, and then, when Wall Street was about to melt down, pushed Congress into approving a no-strings bailout -- both of which cost the nation billions more.

Indeed, we're still living with George W. Bush's legacy -- the last Republican to occupy the White House -- which is a truth that Romney is desperate to put out of our minds. He wants to blame the bad economy, and most of everything else, on Obama.

The GOP was intent on not even bringing up Bush's name at the GOP convention, because **the former president might also remind Americans how little the Republicans care about average Americans, like those caught in Hurricane Katrina, and how much they care about top corporate and Wall Street executives, like those being entertained in Tampa.**

But Hurricane Isaac seems likely to remind Americans anyway. And the split screen on the TV newscasts -- part GOP convention, part Hurricane Isaac bashing into the Gulf Coast -- will pose a public-relations problem to the GOP of the first order.

20120827-05	17:03	SteveG	"Prosecutor: Georgia Murder Case Uncovers Terror Plot"
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"Prosecutor: Georgia Murder Case Uncovers Terror Plot" by Russ Bynum, AP/Yahoo! News

Aug. 27, 2012, (<http://news.yahoo.com/prosecutor-ga-murder-case-uncovers-terror-plot-173341769.html>)

(LUDOWICI, Ga.) Four Army soldiers based in southeast Georgia killed a former comrade and his girlfriend to protect an anarchist militia group they formed that stockpiled assault weapons and plotted a range of anti-government attacks, prosecutors told a judge Monday.

Prosecutors in rural Long County, near the sprawling Army post Fort Stewart, said the militia group of active and former U.S. military members spent at least \$87,000 buying guns and bomb components. They allege the group was serious enough to kill two people — former soldier Michael Roark and his 17-year-old girlfriend, Tiffany York — by shooting them in the woods last December in order to keep its plans secret.

"This domestic terrorist organization did not simply plan and talk," prosecutor Isabel Pauley told a Superior Court judge. "Prior to the murders in this case, the group took action. Evidence shows the group possessed the knowledge, means and motive to carry out their plans."

One of the Fort Stewart soldiers charged in the case, Pfc. Michael Burnett, also gave testimony that backed up many of the assertions made by prosecutors. The 26-year-old soldier pleaded guilty Monday to manslaughter, illegal gang activity and other charges. He made a deal to cooperate with prosecutors against the three other soldiers.

Prosecutors said the group called itself F.E.A.R., short for Forever Enduring Always Ready. Pauley said authorities don't know how many members it had.

Burnett, 26, said he knew the group's leaders from serving with them at Fort Stewart. He agreed to testify against fellow soldiers Pvt. Isaac Aguigui, identified by prosecutors as the militia's founder and leader, and Sgt. Anthony Peden and Pvt. Christopher Salmon.

All are charged by state authorities with malice murder, felony murder, criminal gang activity, aggravated assault and using a firearm while committing a felony. A hearing for the three soldiers was scheduled Thursday.

Prosecutors say Roark, 19, served with the four defendants in the 4th Brigade Combat Team of the Army's 3rd Infantry Division and became involved with the militia. Pauley said the group believed it had been betrayed by Roark, who left the Army two days before he was killed, and decided the ex-soldier and his girlfriend needed to be silenced.

Burnett testified that on the night of Dec. 4, he and the three other soldiers lured Roark and York to some woods a short distance from the Army post under the guise that they were going target shooting. He said Peden shot Roark's girlfriend in the head while she was trying to get out of her car. Salmon, he said, made Roark get on his knees and shot him twice in the head. Burnett said Aguigui ordered the killings.

"A 'loose end' is the way Isaac put it," Burnett said.

Aguigui's attorney, Daveniya Fisher, did not immediately return a phone call from The Associated Press. Attorneys for Peden and Salmon both declined to comment Monday.

Also charged in the killings is Salmon's wife, Heather Salmon. Her attorney, Charles Nester, did not immediately return a call seeking comment.

Pauley said Aguigui funded the militia using \$500,000 in insurance and benefit payments from the death of his pregnant wife a year ago. Aguigui was not charged in his wife's death, but Pauley told the judge her death was "highly suspicious."

She said Aguigui used the money to buy \$87,000 worth of semiautomatic assault rifles, other guns and bomb components that were recovered from the accused soldiers' homes and from a storage locker. He also used the insurance payments to buy land for his militia group in Washington State, Pauley said.

In a videotaped interview with military investigators, Pauley said, Aguigui called himself "the nicest cold-blooded murderer you will ever meet." He used the Army to recruit militia members, who wore distinctive tattoos that resemble an anarchy symbol, she said. Prosecutors say they have no idea how many members belong to the group.

"All members of the group were on active-duty or were former members of the military," Pauley said. "He targeted soldiers who were in trouble or disillusioned."

The prosecutor said the militia group had big plans. It plotted to take over Fort Stewart by seizing its ammunition control point and talked of bombing the Forsyth Park fountain in nearby Savannah, she said. In Washington state, she added, the group plotted to bomb a dam and poison the state's apple crop. Ultimately, prosecutors said, the militia's goal was to overthrow the government and assassinate the president.

Fort Stewart spokesman Kevin Larson said the Army has dropped its own charges against the four soldiers in the slayings of Roark and York. The Military authorities filed their charges in March but never acted on them. Fort Stewart officials Monday refused to identify the units the accused soldiers served in and their jobs within those units.

"Fort Stewart-Hunter Army Airfield does not have a gang or militia problem," Larson said in a prepared statement, though he said Army investigators still have an open investigation in the case.

"However, we don't believe there are any unknown subjects," he said.

District Attorney Tom Durden said his office has been sharing information with federal authorities, but no charges have been filed in federal court. Jim Durham, an assistant U.S. attorney for the Southern District of Georgia, would not comment on whether a case is pending.

20120827-06	17:32	SteveG	"Chris Matthews Accuses Romney of Playing 'Race Card'"
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Video is worth watching...

["Chris Matthews Accuses Romney of Playing 'Race Card'" \(w/video\) by Dylan Stableford, Yahoo! News](#)

Aug. 27, 2012, (<http://news.yahoo.com/blogs/ticket/chris-matthews-race-card-romney-priebus-145819601.html>)

Video (Chris Matthews Rips Reince Priebus): <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VxGUnc57eP0>.

Chris Matthews lashed out at Republican National Committee Chairman Reince Priebus on Monday in Tampa during a live "Morning Joe" segment, with the feisty MSNBC host accusing Mitt Romney and the GOP of playing the race card in their campaign against President Barack Obama.

"It is an embarrassment to your party to play that card," Matthews said. "This stuff about getting rid of the work requirement for welfare is dishonest, everyone's pointed out it's dishonest, and you are playing that little ethnic card there. You can play games and giggle about it, but the fact is your side is playing that card. You start talking about work requirements, everyone knows what game you're playing. It's a race card."

Matthews railed Priebus over Romney's recent joke about the birther movement.

"This thing about if your name is Romney," Matthews said. "Yeah you went to prep school and you brag about it. This guy's got an African name, he has to live with it. Look who's going further in their life. Who was born on third base? This absurdity, making fun of the birth certificate issue."

"Of course he's playing the race card," he continued. "Why would he bring [the birth certificate] up?"

"Because he's an awkward joker," co-host Mika Brzezinski responded.

"He misfired badly on the joke," Joe Scarborough said.

Tom Brokaw, seated next to Matthews, called it a demonstration of Romney's "awkward sense of humor."

"I do think in fairness that during the debates there was a lot of stuff aimed at the president that was not refuted by leaders of the party," Brokaw said.

Priebus, who stayed mostly silent during Matthews' rant, eventually responded.

"I'm not going to get into a shouting match with Chris," Priebus said, calling his accusations "garbage."

"We've gotten to a point in politics where any moment of levity is frowned upon by guys like you just so you can push your brand," the RNC chairman said. "You know what, good for you."

Last week on "The Tonight Show," Matthews was far less critical of the GOP campaign, but alluded to Romney's awkwardness.

"He's a little remote, you know?" Matthews said. "He says things like, 'Oh, I just left the aircraft.' What are you, a Conehead? What planet are you from? Nobody talks like that. We earthlings have a certain language. [We say] 'I just got off the plane.'"

20120827-08 17:52 SteveB Fw: MoveOn Action: "Stepping on the Middle Class" (30-Second TV Ad)

Video: http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=RXfy1aA9oKI.

from MoveOn:

Our efforts to define Mitt Romney as the candidate for the 1% are working. Nearly 6 in 10 Americans think Romney will look out for the rich more than the middle class if he becomes president.¹

But Romney just pulled ahead of President Obama in the latest national poll, and he's gaining ground in some key swing states.² At the Republican Convention in Tampa this week, Romney's going to try to do what all the experts say he has to—make us believe that he actually cares about the middle class, even though all the evidence shows otherwise.

That's why it's so important to remind voters that Romney and Ryan will step on cash-strapped seniors by dismantling Medicare and walk over the struggling middle class with more taxes to pay for steep tax cuts for the rich.³ And we have a video that LITERALLY shows just that.

[Watch this short video of Romney and Ryan accepting their nomination for President and Vice President of the 1%. And then share it with all your friends so that they're not fooled.](#)



Thanks for all you do. –Lenore, Tate, Emily, Robin, and the rest of the team

P.S. Tune in soon for the hilarious mockumentary about how Mitt Romney survived his hardscrabble childhood 'burbs of Bloomfield Hills to become the man he is today. It's aptly named "The Man from Bloomfield Hills", and it's coming out just in time for Romney's acceptance speech!

Sources:

¹"Poll: Obama, Romney neck-and-neck ahead of party conventions," *The Washington Post*, August 27, 2012, <http://www.moveon.org/r?r=279437&id=&t=5&id=49894-20195165-mpO7lax&t=4>.

²Ibid.

"Despite Medicare plan, Romney gains in swing states," *The Boston Globe*, August 23, 2012, <http://www.moveon.org/r?r=279459&id=49894-20195165-mpO7lax&t=5>.

³"Study: Romney tax plan would result in cuts for rich, higher burden for others," *The Washington Post*, August 1, 2012, <http://www.moveon.org/r?r=278241&id=49894-20195165-mpO7lax&t=6>.

20120827-10 20:50 SteveG Fw: Kucinich Action: Make Your Voice Heard!
--

from Dennis Kucinich:

This week and next week, the Republican and Democratic parties are gathering in Tampa and Charlotte to have their conventions and agree upon a national platform - the official party position.

We launched Kucinich Action this summer to continue to stand for policies to transform our communities, our nation, and our world. This has always been a movement based on your voice, hopes and ideas.

As we move toward the next phase in our movement, I want to hear from you. What issues do you care about most? What should we focus on in the coming months? Click here to fill out our 2012 Issues Survey, and let us know where you stand.

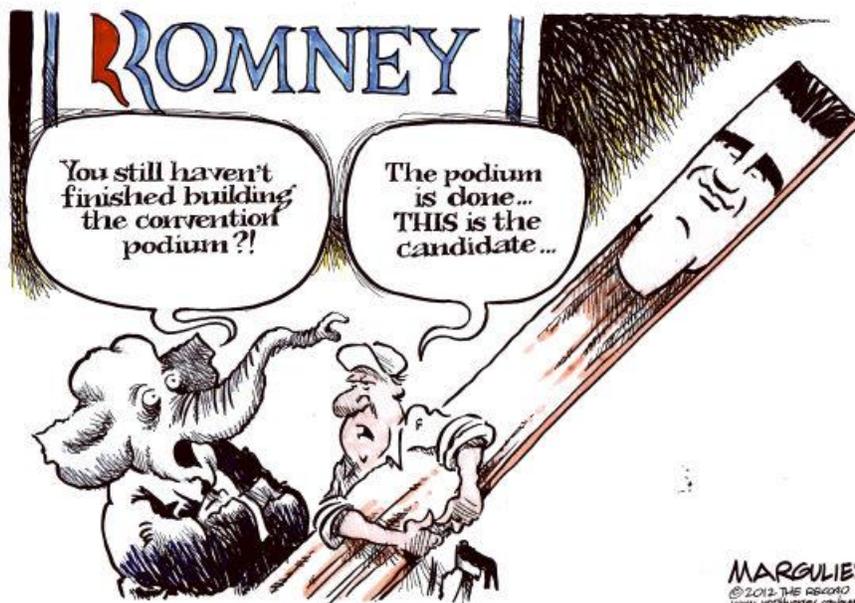
We have big plans for Kucinich Action and our movement, but we need your help to guide this movement forward. Your input will help us as we select allies to work with us on these priorities in the next Congress.

Please click here to complete the Kucinich Action issues survey:

<http://action.kucinich.us/page/s/issuessurvey>.

Let us continue to lead the way forward. Please join me. Together we can meet any challenge. Together we will restore peace, liberty and social and economic justice to this land we love.

Courage, Dennis Kucinich [We know who he got that from. –SteveB]



<http://www.thefancydressbox.co.uk/ace-of-spades-card-mens-costume-one-size-p-3938.html>



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

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

Your email address will always be kept strictly confidential.

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

<http://www.FriendsOfTheMiddle.org>

FriendsOfTheMiddle@hotmail.com

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FRIENDS OF THE MIDDLE NEWSLETTER #214 — AUG. 29, 2012

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

INDEX: Click here.

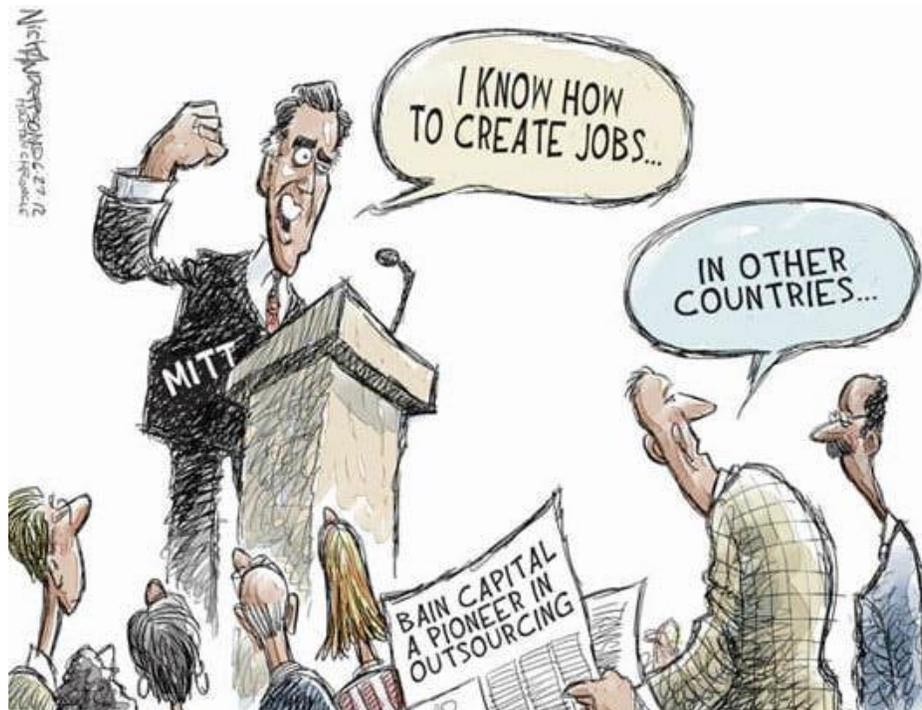
We ALL Built It, Not Just You, Mitt R0mney!

(posted by SteveG, Aug. 29, 2012)

"Prof. Robert S. McElvaine of Millsaps College examined employment data for the 64 years from the beginning of Harry Truman's presidency to the end of George W. Bush's. He found that an average of two million jobs were created per year when a Democrat was president, compared with one million annually when a Republican was president."

"The Secret Weapon: All of Us" by Nicholas D. Kristof, *The New York Times*

Aug. 28, 2012, (http://www.nytimes.com/2012/08/29/opinion/kristof-the-secret-weapon-all-of-us.html?_r=1&smid=fb-share)



The Republican National Convention opened by smacking President Obama with the theme "We Built it."

To pound that message, Republicans turned to a Delaware businesswoman, Sher Valenzuela, who is also a candidate for lieutenant governor. Valenzuela and her husband built an upholstery business that now employs dozens of workers.

Valenzuela presumably was picked to speak so that she could thunder at Obama for disdaining capitalism.

Oops. It turns out that Valenzuela relied not only on her entrepreneurial skills but also on — yes, government help. Media Matters for America, a liberal watchdog group, documented \$2 million in loans from the Small Business Administration for Valenzuela's company, plus \$15 million in government contracts (mostly noncompetitive ones).

In a presentation earlier this year, Valenzuela described government assistance as an entrepreneur's "biggest 'secret weapon.'"

Someone has set up a parody Web site, using the name of Valenzuela's company, First State Manufacturing, to mock the Republican message. The site, FirstStateManufacturing.com, declares, "Thank God government was there for me."

In short, the Republicans are inadvertently underscoring the point that President Obama was expressing in his "you didn't build that" comment in July. Obama noted then that "if you've been successful, you didn't get there on your own." He pointed to public investments in roads and bridges that enable businesses to flourish, and then he inelegantly added, "If you've got a business, you didn't build that."

Fox News erupted in outrage, selectively editing the clip to confirm Republican prejudices that Obama doesn't understand the private sector. This fits into the Republican narrative that business executives are heroic job creators when they aren't held back by regulations and taxes imposed by quasi-socialist Muslims born in Kenya.

Democrats tried to highlight a flaw in that narrative when they released a new ad pointing to Mitt Romney's outsourcing of jobs and telling him, "You didn't build that — you destroyed it."

Yet to me, that Democratic line of attack on Romney as a serial job destroyer feels unfair. Sometimes the way to save a company is to cut labor costs or outsource jobs, and almost nobody wants to ban trade or overseas production even though they can cost jobs.

What is fair is to observe that the Republicans' claim that they are the great job creators is a fiction.

Prof. Robert S. McElvaine of Millsaps College examined employment data for the 64 years from the beginning of Harry Truman's presidency to the end of George W. Bush's. He found that **an average of two million jobs were created per year when a Democrat was president, compared with one million annually when a Republican was president.**

More pointedly, and unfortunately for Romney, business executives have only a mediocre record when transferring their skills to government. In the last great economic mess, this country was led by a Republican who had been stunningly successful in business: Herbert Hoover. Hmm. More recently, President George W. Bush staffed his cabinet with C.E.O.'s who had been stellar in the private sector — and that didn't work out so well, either.

Obama's point about our shared undertaking was made last year, more eloquently, by Elizabeth Warren, the Massachusetts Democrat running for Senate:

"There is nobody in this country who got rich on his own — nobody!" she said. "You built a factory out there? Good for you. But I want to be clear: You moved your goods to market on the roads the rest of us paid for; you hired workers the rest of us paid to educate; you all were safe in your factory because of police forces and fire forces that the rest of us paid for..."

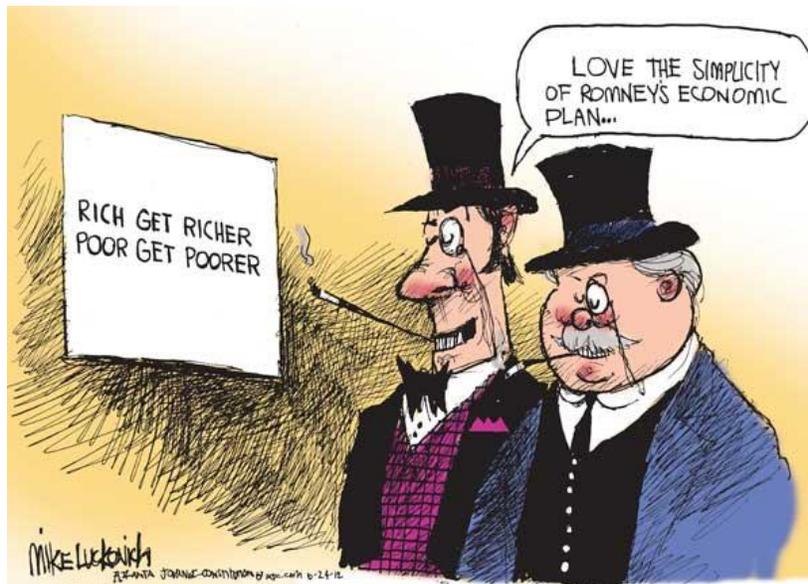
"You built a factory, and it turned into something terrific or a great idea? God bless. Keep a big hunk of it. But part of the underlying social contract is, you take a hunk of that and pay forward for the next kid who comes along."

In short, taxes don't just smother. They can also fuel growth — when they're invested in highways or the Internet, in colleges or early childhood education. They can create opportunities, as they did for Sher Valenzuela.

Or for Romney himself. He built his Bain empire partly because he was smart and hard-working, but also because of a great education and because of tax breaks for debt financing. Tax loopholes helped him build his fortune, and other loopholes gave him the low tax rates to retain it.

If the Republican convention wishes to highlight and explain Romney's success, it should have a moment of silence to honor our infernal tax code.

Who built this country? Entrepreneurs, yes. But so did schoolteachers and railway construction workers. Doctors and truckers. Scientists and soldiers. You didn't build it, Mitt Romney — we all built it.



20120828-01 08:56 Pam Re: Delusions (reply to SteveG, FotM Newsletter #213)

SteveG: (re: Romney) I think it is intriguing/interesting that a man who has been running for president for six years (at a minimum), has his staunch party supporters who state that he is a private person and we just need to get to know him. Goodness gracious, one would think he would have let us know him over the past six years, that is, if he had nothing to hide, had the same beliefs then and now, did not flip flop at least once a day, etc.

Help me understand the change in welfare to work program through Obama's executive order. My understanding is that if a state had a different plan (a plan that would get the recipients to work quicker) the state could apply for and receive a waiver to the federal rules – creating smaller federal control and more states rights and getting people from welfare to work quicker. What did I miss? Why would the right wingers not want more state control & quicker movement to work?

Watch for the republican smirk – it will be everywhere this week.

Well put.

20120828-07 10:40 SteveG Re: Delusions (reply to SteveB)

SteveB: I thought of another delusion along the lines of Art's (FotM Newsletter #213):

There is absolutely no relation, in any way shape or form, between the present economy and eight years of Bush administration and, for the most part, 40 or 50 years of Republican policy dominance. The only factor affecting everything is President Obama. How could a black man understand something as complicated as capitalism? Or even a half-black man...

Or a half-white man...

20120828-05 10:34 Art Re: Delusions (reply to SteveB)

Ugly but true. That may be one of the most amazing things to me, is the Republican position that somehow this economy is all President Obama's fault and even more amazing, that people are buying it.

20120828-08 10:45 Pam Re: Delusions (reply to Art, above)

I cannot fathom how the Obama family endure everything they have to deal with. Any politician's family really. What a snake pit politics is. I truly believe Obama has done and is doing the best he can, given the circumstances he inherited. How does he stand the pressure, I wonder? I know the debates will make me so nervous, I'm not sure I can watch them. It's way worse than the Super Bowl. But I'm anxious to see how Obama does. I read an article about how rehearsed Romney will be and what a good debater he is (\$10,000 bet, anyone?) and how Obama has other things on his mind and isn't as good on his feet as he is at giving set speeches. Still, I'm putting my money on Obama--with my fingers crossed. Maybe the country will get lucky and Romney will produce another of his memorable gaffes.

20120828-09 10:51 Art Re: Delusions (reply to Pam, above)

It was the debates with McCain that first put me in his camp. He came across as a very smart, very concerned guy. I liked that, and you can imagine how a Vietnam veteran ex military person like me wanted to favor McCain.

20120828-02 09:04 SteveG "The Not-So-Social Gospel"

What if Jesus had been a Republican?

"The Not-So-Social Gospel" by Michael Lerner, Tikkun/Cath News

Aug. 24, 2012, (<http://www.tikkun.org/tikkundaily/2012/08/24/the-not-so-social-gospel/>)

This was sent to Tikkun on email from Cath News and a column called "The Not-So-Social-Gospel." It is a powerful reminder both of how far sections of the Christian world have strayed from the teachings of Jesus, and also a reminder of the tens of millions of Catholics who are deeply dedicated to social justice, peace, generosity and love (even though unfortunately they are stuck in a church whose leadership is more interested in demonizing gays and abortions and attacking American Nuns who take Jesus' teachings seriously than in carrying on the progressive elements in Jesus' gospel). It saddens us at Tikkun to see how twisted that Church leadership has become, just as we have been saddened by how twisted the Jewish leadership has become to give blind support to the oppressive policies of Israel toward Palestinians, and reminds us to once again invite all Christians who do feel connected to the social justice, peace and love oriented Jesus to join our INTERFAITH Network of Spiritual Progressives at www.spiritualprogressives.org so that we can work together to amplify these voices and provide comfort and support to those who are being "dissed" in their own religious communities for taking seriously the highest teachings of their God.

The Lazy Paralytic

1. When Jesus returned to Capernaum after some days, it was reported that he was at his home. 2. So many gathered around that there was no longer room for them, not even in front of the door; and he was speaking the word to them. 3. Then some people came, bringing to him a paralyzed man, carried by four of them. 4. And when they could not bring him to Jesus because of the crowd, they removed the roof above him; and after having dug through it, they let down the mat on which the paralytic lay. 5. When Jesus saw this he grew angry, "Why did you wreck my roof? Do you have any idea how much that cost to install? Do you know how many tables and chairs I had to make in my carpentry shop to pay for that roof? The reeds alone cost five talents. I had them carted in from Bethany." 6. The disciples had never seen Jesus so angry about his possessions. He continued, "This house is my life. And the roof is the best part." The disciples fell silent. 7. "It's bad enough that you trash my private property, now you want me to heal you?" said Jesus, "And did you not see the stone walls around this house?" "Yes," said the man's friends. "Are these not the stone walls common to the towns and villages of Galilee?" 8. "No," Jesus answered. "This is a gated community. How did you get in?" The man's friends grew silent. 9. Then Jesus turned and said to the paralytic, "Besides, can't you take care of your own health problems? I'm sure that your family can care for you, or maybe the synagogue can help out." 10. "No, Lord," answered the man's friends. "There is no one. His injuries are too severe. To whom else can we go?" 11. "Well, not me," said Jesus. "What would happen if I provided access to free health care for everyone? That would mean that people would not only get lazy and entitled, but they would take advantage of the system. 12. Besides, look at me: I'm healthy. And you know why? Because I worked hard for my money, and took care of myself." The paralyzed man then grew sad and he addressed Jesus. "But I did work, Lord," said the paralytic. "Until an accident rendered me paralyzed." "Yes," said the man's friends. "He worked very hard." 13. "Well," said Jesus, "That's just part of life, isn't it?" "Then what am I to do, Lord?" said the paralytic. "I don't know. Why don't you sell your mat?" 14. All in the crowd then grew sad. "Actually, you know what you can do?" said Jesus. "You can reimburse me for my roof. Or I'll sue you." And all were amazed. 15. "We have never seen anything like this," said the crowd.

The Very Poorly Prepared Crowd

1. The day was drawing to a close, and the twelve apostles came to Jesus and said, "Send the crowd away, so that they may go into the surrounding villages and countryside, to lodge and get provisions; for we are here in a deserted place." 2 But Jesus said to them, "Why not give them something to eat?" They said, "We have no more than five loaves and two fish – unless we are to go and buy food for all these people." 3 For there were about five thousand men. And Jesus said to his disciples, "You know what? You're right. Don't waste your time and shekels. It would be positively immoral for you to spend any of your hard-earned money for these people. They knew full well that they were coming to a deserted place, and should have relied on themselves and brought more food. As far as

I'm concerned, it's every five thousand men for themselves." 4. The disciples were astonished by this teaching. "But Lord," said Thomas. "The crowd will surely go hungry." Jesus was amazed at his hard-headedness. "That's not my problem, Thomas. Better that their stomachs are empty than they become overly dependent on someone in authority to provide loaves and fishes for them on a regular basis. Where will it end? Will I have to feed them everyday?" "No, Lord," said Thomas, "Just today. When they are without food. After they have eaten their fill, they will be healthy, and so better able to listen to your word and learn from you." Jesus was grieved at Thomas's answer. Jesus answered, "It is written: There's no such thing as a free lunch." So taking the five loaves and the two fish, he looked up to heaven, and took one loaf and one fish for himself, and gave the rest to the twelve, based on their previously agreed-upon contractual per diem. But he distributed none to the crowd, because they needed to be taught a lesson. So Jesus ate and he was satisfied. The disciples somewhat less so. "Delicious," said Jesus. What was left over was gathered up and saved for Jesus, should he grow hungry in a few hours. The very poorly prepared crowd soon dispersed.

The Rich and Therefore Blessed Young Man

1. As Jesus was setting out on a journey, a man ran up to him and knelt before him, and asked, "Good Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" 2. And Jesus said to him, "What have you done so far?" 3. And he said to Him, "Well I was born into a wealthy family, got into a good school in Galilee because my parents donated a few thousand talents for a building with a nice reed roof, and now I have a high-paying job in the Roman treasury managing risk." 4. Looking at him, Jesus felt an admiration for him, and said to him, "Blessed are you! For you are not far from being independently wealthy." And the man was happy. Then Jesus said, "But there is one thing you lack: A bigger house in a gated community in Tiberias. Buy that and you will have a treasure indeed. And make sure you get a stone countertop for the kitchen. Those are really nice." The disciples were amazed. 5. Peter asked him, "Lord, shouldn't he sell all his possessions and give it to the poor?" Jesus grew angry. "Get behind me, Satan! He has earned it!" Peter protested: "Lord," he said, "Did this man not have an unjust advantage? What about those who are not born into wealthy families, or who do not have the benefit of a good education, or who, despite all their toil, live in the poorer areas of Galilee, like Nazareth, your own home town?" 6. "Well," said Jesus, "first of all, that's why I left Nazareth. There were too many poor people always asking me for charity. They were as numerous as the stars in the sky, and they annoyed me. Second, once people start spending again, like this rich young man, the Galilean economy will inevitably rebound, and eventually some of it will trickle down to the poor. Blessed are the patient! But giving the money away, especially if he can't write it off, is a big fat waste." The disciples' amazement knew no bounds. "But Lord," they said, "what about the passages in both the Law and the Prophets that tell us to care for widows and orphans, for the poor, for the sick, for the refugee? What about the many passages in the Scriptures about justice?" 7. "Those are just metaphors," said Jesus. "Don't take everything so literally."

20120828-03	09:18	Pam	Re: "The Not-So-Social Gospel" (reply to SteveG, above)
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I just wish some Republicans would read this.

20120828-04	09:57	Art	Re: "The Not-So-Social Gospel" (reply to SteveG, above)
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Good one!

20120828-16	21:37	SteveG	"Church Can't Collect Ref. 74 Donations"
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Got to watch those sneaky church people...

"Church Can't Collect Ref. 74 Donations" by AP/NBC/KNDO

Aug. 28, 2012, (http://www.nbcnews.com/id/48820568/ns/local_news-yakima_wa/)

(OLYMPIA, WA) The state's campaign finance watchdog says the state's Catholic churches can't collect donations from parishioners for the campaign seeking to overturn the state's gay marriage law. Last week, Yakima Bishop Joseph Tyson sent a letter to pastors in 41 parishes of the Yakima Diocese asking them to announce a special collection that would go to Preserve Marriage Washington, which is fighting the same-sex marriage law that was passed earlier this year. The diocese's chief of staff, Monsignor Robert Siler, said Tuesday that the expected collection date was Sept. 8-9. But Lori Anderson, a spokeswoman for the state's Public Disclosure Commission, says no organization can be an intermediary for a contribution. She says the church can hand out envelopes, but either a member of Preserve Washington has to be on hand to collect them or parishioners must send them in individually.

20120828-17 23:58 SteveG Graphics: Church & State

If Ministers Are Going
To Preach Politics,
It's Time To
**Tax the
Churches**

Did you know?

The original **Constitution** of the United States that was ratified in **1789** had only **one reference to religion**: [Article 6] *No religious Test shall ever be required as a Qualification to any Office or public Trust under the United States.*

The *de facto* **motto** of the United States, adopted as part of the Great Seal of the U.S. by an Act of Congress in 1782, was **E. Pluribus Unum (Out of Many, One)**. Congress **changed it 174 years later (1956)** to "In God We Trust."

The **original 'Pledge of Allegiance'** was written in 1892 by Baptist Minister Francis Bellamy who **DID NOT INCLUDE** the words "**Under God.**" Those were added by Congress 62 years later (1954).

The **U.S. didn't issue Paper Currency until 1861**, and **'In God We Trust' didn't appear on it for 96 years (1957)**.

Just after the **Red Scare in the 1950's**, **CONGRESS CHANGED** the **Pledge of Allegiance** and our **Nation's Motto** over the **FEAR of COMMUNISM**.

In a time **when fear is traded like a commodity**, and the word **SOCIALISM** is being used to **create the same fear** as the old word **COMMUNISM**, let's **REMEMBER** that our country was **NOT founded on fear**. **NO, OUR NATION** was **founded out of HOPE** for a better world where **all people were EQUAL** – that we were **ONE from MANY**.

**Let's not let fear change our nation's
great tradition & direction again.**

Last Friday, Chef Ray Trono and Chef Anna Quattrochi, and Ray's son Thomas, joined me and an AWL (Absent With Leave) Susette for lunch at Caffe Macs. Although there is a Beer Bash scheduled today, it's all Food Trucks, so cafeteria staff are not involved in preparations for the 'Bash. That means that the menu at Caffe Macs suffered no evil impact of the afternoon Beer Bash.

Today, Chef Alejandro unleashed an awesome seared tuna plate that sated even my fresh fish lust. I apologize for not having had the time to complete this message last week; it's the beginning of the academic year, and that always has a crushing effect on my department.

The lunch plate was an awesomely chunky slab of very fine yellowfin tuna, with pickled carrot slices and a very tasty mild yellow curry sauce:



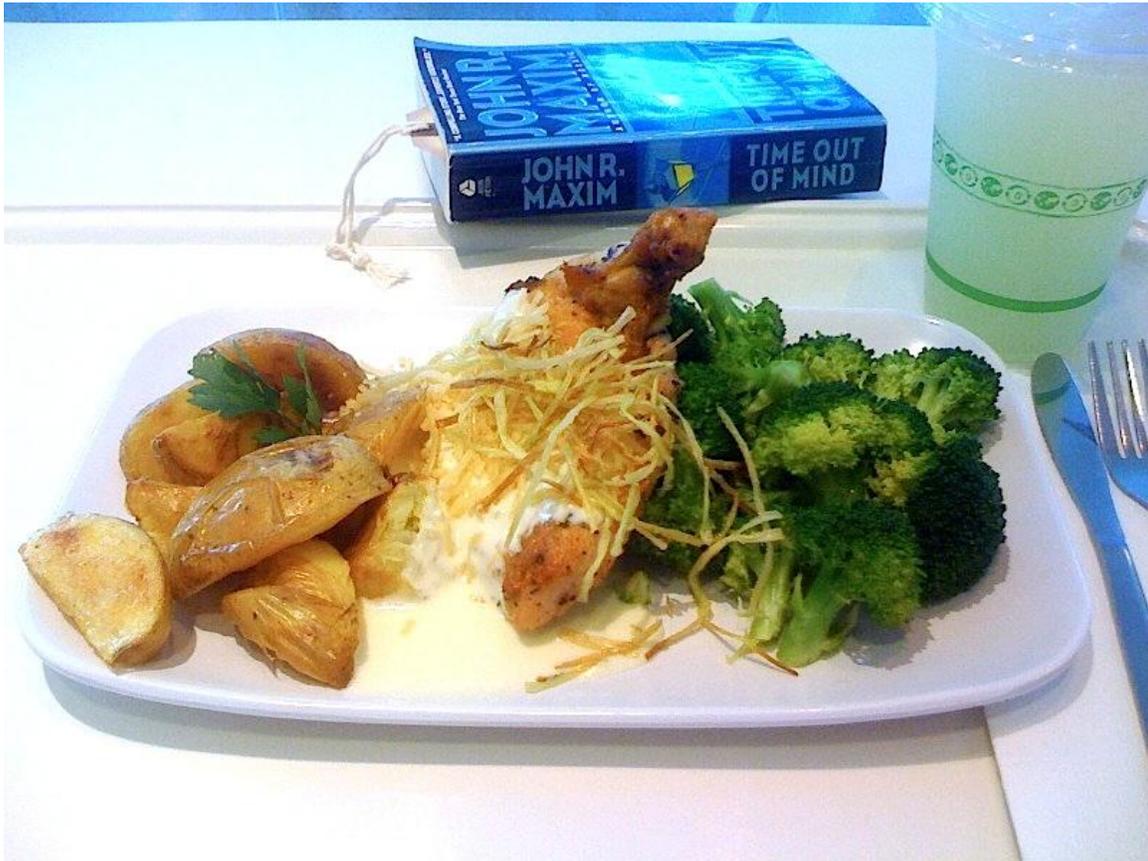
Seared Aji Tuna with Curry Sauce



Tuna Sashimi Surprise!

[20120828-06](#) 10:39 Ben Photo: Monday's Lunch at Apple

I make jokes about chickening out, or chickening up, but I really do like chicken. Like so many foods (all foods!) preparation matters, and yesterday, for Chefs Patricia and Bladimir, it really paid off: she brined the 'airline' portions - nicely trimmed breast quarters with the messy top wing joints removed - before searing and whatever herb treatment was applied. Tarragon, to be sure, in tasteful, tasty moderation; it seemed gently suffused throughout my serving. The deep golden skin was seared to thin pliability, bordering on crisp, adding a modest layer of concentrated flavor to the dish. A lush Asiago-leek sauce complemented and decorated the dish; it was so yummy that I was unable to avert myself from sopping up as much as I could with tender chicken morsels. A nicely blanched heap of ready-to-munch broccoli crowns, and a generous heap of Yukon Gold potatoes rounded out a lovely plate as tasty as anyone, even a hardened fish junkie like me, might wish:



Seared Tarragon Chicken with Asiago-Leek Sauce

20120828-13 14:38 Ben Photo: Today's Lunch at Apple

That's Corn-onna-Cob. Weirdly, something I had last night, too, for the third time in all this year. I guess it's Corn Harvest season somewhere!

Today's Lovely Lunch was, as you can see, a generous serving of fresh Gulf shrimp, marinated with lime, chilis, and spices, then sauteed with bell peppers and onions. Very Latin, and quite delicious; Chef Patricia prepared a lovely dish including sofrito rice that was so tasty I ate it all; she also garnished the corn with Cojita cheese, a combination i'd not had before today. A lovely plate, and a lovely lunch, of which I left but a few grains of rice that eluded my chopsticks. (Yes, I eat the tails...)



Lime-Chili Shrimp with Corn on a Cob

20120828-10 12:01 SteveB "The Mirage of Our Lives"

"The Mirage of Our Lives" by Chris Hedges, TruthDig/NationofChange

Aug. 28, 2012, (<http://www.nationofchange.org/mirage-our-lives-1346160468>)

Dave Eggers' gem of a book, *A Hologram for the King*, is a parable about the decadence, fragility and heartlessness of late, decayed corporate capitalism. It is about the small, largely colorless men and women who serve as managers in our suicidal outsourcing of manufacturing jobs and the methodical breaking of labor unions. It is about the lie of globalization, a lie that impoverishes us all to increase corporate profits.

A Hologram for the King tells the story of Alan, a lackluster 54-year-old consultant who is desperately trying to snag one final big contract in Saudi Arabia for Reliant, a corporation that is "the largest I.T. supplier in the world," to save himself from financial ruin. Alan has come to realize that managers like him who made outsourcing possible will be discarded as human refuse now that the process is complete, left to wander like ghosts—or holograms—among the ruins. And Eggers' novel is a subtle, deft and poignant look at the horrendous toll this corporate process takes on self-esteem, on family, on health, on community and finally on the nation itself. It does so, like parables from Greek tragedy or George Orwell, by finding the perfect story to make a point that is universal.

Eggers, who showcased his talent as a writer of nonfiction in *Zeitoun* about Hurricane Katrina, combines fiction and reporting to create a small masterpiece. The book works because of its authenticity, its close attention to detail and Eggers' respect for fact. I spent many months as a correspondent in Saudi Arabia where the novel is set. Eggers captures in tight, bullet-like prose the utter decadence, hypocrisy and corruption of the kingdom, as well as its bleak landscape, suffocating heat and soulless glass and concrete office buildings. He is keenly aware that the outward religiosity and piety mask a moral and physical rot that fits seamlessly into the world of globalized capitalism.

Eggers conjures up the bizarre incongruities of Saudi Arabia from his image of a Saudi soldier in a beach chair cooling his bare feet in an inflatable pool next to a Humvee, to a wild embassy party where drunken expatriates in

their underwear dive into the swimming pool for pills. At one point Alan mistakenly stumbles onto an unfinished floor of a luxury condo where 25 foreign laborers from Malaysia, Pakistan and the Philippines, crammed together as if on a slave ship, are fighting over a discarded cellphone. This scene captures the outward illusion of prosperity of global capitalism and the internal and brutal oppression of workers who make the illusion possible.

Alan opened the fire door and a roar of echoes flooded through. He was in a large raw space full of men, some in their underclothes, some in red jumpsuits, all yelling. It looked like pictures he'd seen of prison gyms converted to dormitories. There were fifty bunks, cloths hanging on lines between them. The beds were empty, though—all the men were gathered in the center of the room, barking, pushing. Alan had interrupted some kind of fight.

Alan's attempt to intervene backfires. The workers yell in his face. He is pushed. He turns and runs.

Alan's professional life follows the trajectory of American manufacturing. He was an executive with Schwinn when the company broke the union, tried to set up a plant with nonunionized workers in Mississippi, which failed, and then shipped its production to China. Alan then moved his professional career "from Schwinn to Huffy to Frontier Manufacturing Partners to Alan Clay Consulting to sitting at home watching DVDs of the Red Sox winning the Series in '04 and '07."

Alan, like Willy Loman, has the reservoir of stock salesman jokes, the upbeat optimism that studiously ignores reality, and his uniform: khakis and crisp white shirts. He dropped out of college to sell Fuller Brush products. He applies what he learns from an older, experienced Fuller Brush salesman named Trivole to life. Trivole says that there are four basic appeals to people: Money. Romance. Self-Preservation. Recognition. Alan sells bikes the same way he sold Fuller Brush products. "All the principles applied: the bikes were practical (Money); they were beautiful, glittering things (Romance); they were safe and durable (Self-Preservation); and they were status symbols for any family (Recognition)."

Alan marries a firebrand activist, Ruby, whose personal bitterness and cruelty, as well as passion for social justice, expose his timidity, blandness and intellectual limitations. But Alan, who lacks much of a conscience as well as a sense of direction, is redeemed in Eggers' eyes by his love for his only daughter who, if the deal falls through, which it does, will not be able to go back to "a very good and expensive college." It is Alan's fragility, including his concerns about a cyst on his neck that he lances open with a serrated dinner knife, which remind us that he is human, that like most of us he is at once culpable and a victim. Alan has been rendered, in this new globalized world, impotent. He is no longer capable of sex. He has two disastrous encounters with women during his trip, moments of acute embarrassment and shame. At night he often sits alone in his hotel room on the 10th floor of the Hilton in Jeddah getting drunk on homemade grain alcohol and composing letters he will never send to his daughter Kit.

Alan, Eggers writes, did well in the old America, the one that made things and sold them, the one that paid its workers fair wages with pensions and benefits, the one that made possible a middle class. But that America is gone, destroyed when "he and others decided to have other people, ten thousand miles away, build the things they sold." And Alan must confront in the novel the fact that he was deeply complicit in his own demise, that he "helped scout a new, non-union location for Schwinn, had met with suppliers in China and Taiwan, had contributed not insignificantly ... to all that undid Schwinn and the 1,200 workers employed there."

His "decisions were shortsighted, foolish or expedient," he admits. "He and his peers did not know they were making decisions that would leave them, like Alan, as he now was—virtually broke, nearly unemployed, the proprietor of a one-man consulting firm run out of his home office."

Alan's father Ron is a World War II vet who still has shrapnel in his body and lives on a farm in New Hampshire. Ron, whose crude vitality and generous union pension intimidate his son, barks at Alan over the phone:

"Every day, Alan, all over Asia, hundreds of container ships are leaving their ports, full of every kind of consumer good. Talk about three-dimensional, Alan. These are actual things. They're making things over there, and we're making websites and holograms, while sitting in chairs made in China, working on computers made in China, driving over bridges made in China. Does this sound sustainable to you, Alan?"

The hologram becomes the perfect metaphor for the insubstantial nature of the American economy. None of it is real. It is a mirage. It is held up by credit, by debt, by the printing of endless amounts of new money and by vast schemes of financial speculation and casino capitalism that evaporate as swiftly as a hologram. The development project Alan and his team are bidding on is itself a mirage. He and his team of three snotty young careerists, who look at Alan with scorn and pity, have cooked up a holographic teleconferencing system where a sales representative in London will appear before the Saudi king as a hologram in a tent in the barren wastelands of a planned city with only three buildings, including a two-story welcome center known as King Abdulla Economic City. The holographic sales representative will walk on the stage and speak in Arabic and English and then disappear for the king. And they are sure that this bit of magic will save them.

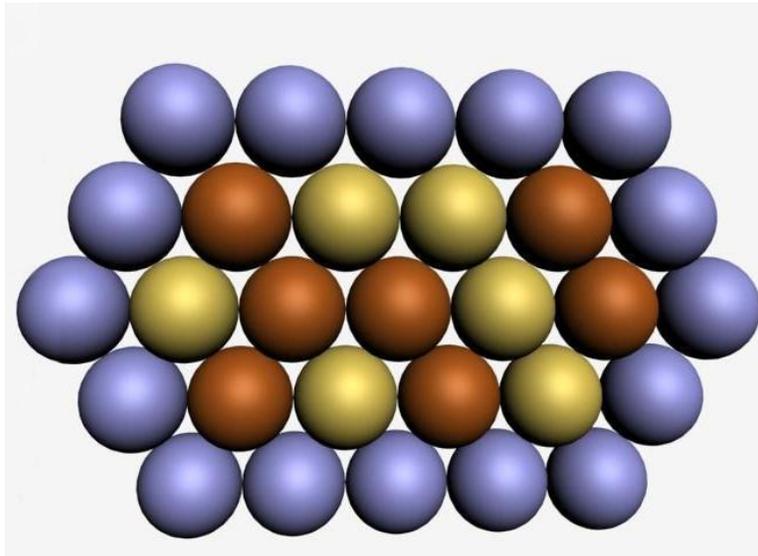
Alan and his co-workers wait 11 days for the king. "One Man's Vision, One Nation's Hope," the billboard advertising the development reads. The king, when he does arrive, watches the hologram impassively and promptly gives the contract to a Chinese firm. And the bubble for Alan, as it has for most of us, bursts. He too becomes a hologram.

20120828-11 13:21 SteveB "Superior Fuel Cell Material Developed"

I guess we've lost our lead in science and technology to Singapore, where taxes are used to benefit the people...

"Superior Fuel Cell Material Developed" by ScienceDaily

Aug. 23, 2012, (<http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2012/08/120824103022.htm>)



An illustration of the new IBN nanocomposite material which is composed of gold-copper alloy atoms in the core and platinum atoms at the outer layer. (Credit: Image courtesy of Agency for Science, Technology and Research (A*STAR), Singapore)

Using a mixture of gold, copper and platinum nanoparticles, IBN researchers have developed a more powerful and longer lasting fuel cell material. This breakthrough was published recently in the journal, *Energy and Environmental Science*.

Fuel cells are a promising technology for use as a source of electricity to power electronic devices, vehicles, military aircraft and equipment. A fuel cell converts the chemical energy from hydrogen (fuel) into electricity through a chemical reaction with oxygen. A fuel cell can produce electricity continuously as long as there is a fuel supply.

Current commercially available fuel cells use platinum nanoparticles as the catalyst to speed up the chemical reaction because platinum is the only metal that can resist the highly acidic conditions inside such a cell. However, the widespread use of fuel cells has been impeded by the high cost of platinum and its low stability.

To overcome this limitation, a team of researchers led by IBN Executive Director Professor Jackie Y. Ying has discovered that by replacing the central part of the catalyst with gold and copper alloy and leaving just the outer layer in platinum, the new hybrid material can provide 5 times higher activity and much greater stability than the commercial platinum catalyst. With further optimization, it would be possible to further increase the material's catalytic properties.

IBN's new nanocomposite material can produce at least 0.571 amperes of electric current per milligram of platinum, compared to 0.109 amperes per milligram of platinum for commercial platinum catalysts. This is also the first time that a catalyst has been shown to enhance both the stability and activity for the fuel cell reaction with a significantly reduced platinum content.

To make this catalyst more active than the commercial platinum catalyst, the researchers have designed the core of the nanocrystalline material to be a gold-copper alloy, which has slightly smaller lattice spacing than the platinum coating on the nanocrystal's surface. This creates a compressive strain on the surface platinum atoms, making the platinum more active in the rate-limiting step of oxygen reduction reaction for the fuel cell. Replacing the core of the nanoparticle with the less expensive gold-copper alloy cuts down the usage of platinum, a highly expensive noble metal.

Professor Ying said, "A key research focus at IBN is to develop green energy technologies that can lead to greater efficiency and environmental sustainability. More active and less costly than conventional platinum catalysts, our new nanocomposite system has enabled us to significantly advance fuel cell development and make the technology more practical for industrial applications."

20120828-14	16:47	Art	Video: Johnny Carson's 1982 "Politician's Lie Detector Test"
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This is pretty good. Wouldn't it be nice to see all politicians but especially R&R, hooked up to this. Suspect those two alone would burn out the machine.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qbWI9xIGba4>

[Source of original email unknown. -SteveB]

Husband of the Year Awards:



The honorable mention goes to the United Kingdom.



Followed closely by the United States of America.



And then Poland.



3rd Place must go to Greece.



It was very, very close but the runner up prize was awarded to Serbia.



But the winner of the "Husband/Partner of the Year" is Ireland!
Ya gotta love the Irish. The Irish are true romantics. Look, he's even holding her hand.

Woman has Man in it.
Mrs. has Mr. in it.
Female has Male in it.
She has He in it.
Madam has Adam in it.

Okay, Okay, it all makes sense now. I never looked at it this way before.

Ever notice how all of women's problems start with MEN?

MENTal illness!
MENstrual cramps!
MENTal breakdown!
MENopause!
GUYnecologist!

AND

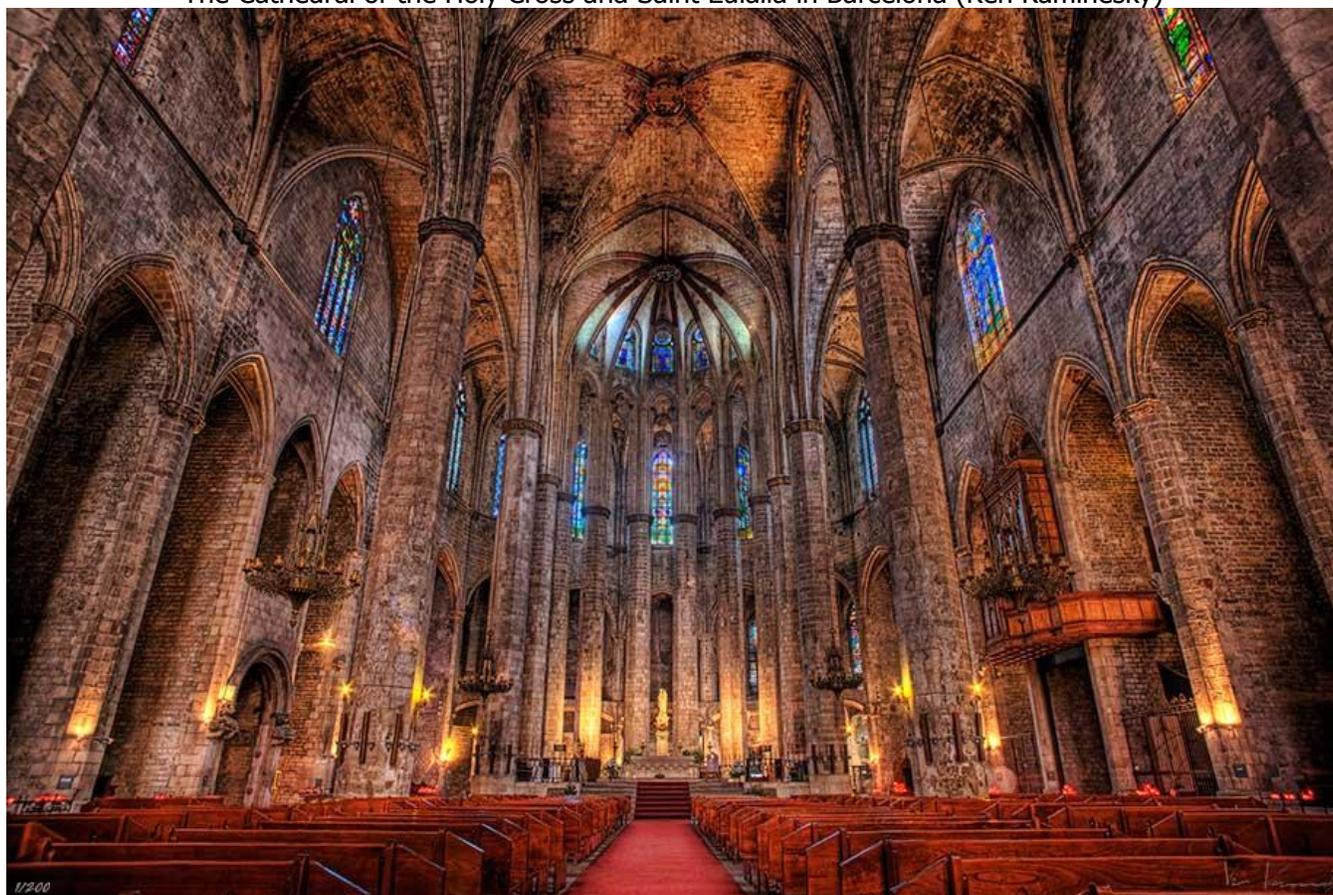
When we have REAL trouble, it's a. HISterectomy!

Remember: You don't stop laughing because you grow old, you grow old because you stop laughing.

20120828-18 23:59 SteveB Photo: Cathedral Interior, Barcelona, Spain

<http://blog.kenkaminesky.com/available-print-gallery/>

The Cathedral of the Holy Cross and Saint Eulalia in Barcelona (Ken Kaminesky)



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

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

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FRIENDS OF THE MIDDLE NEWSLETTER #215 — AUG. 30, 2012

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

INDEX: Click here.

A Campaign Built on 'Big Lies' Not 'Big Ideas'

(posted by Steven W. Baker / SteveB, Aug. 30, 2012)

I guess we should have known what to expect—more lies and more damned lies. What can you expect from candidates who swear, **"We're not going to let our campaign be dictated by fact-checkers."**

"Paul Ryan Address: Convention Speech Built on Demonstrably Misleading Assertions" by Ryan Grim, Huffington Post

Aug. 30, 2012, (http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/08/30/paul-ryan-address_n_1841819.html)



Paul Ryan used misleading assertions in his address at the Republican convention Wednesday.

(TAMPA, FL) Paul Ryan pledged Wednesday that if he and his running mate Mitt Romney were elected president, they would usher in an ethic of responsibility. The Wisconsin congressman and GOP vice presidential candidate repeatedly chided President Barack Obama for blaming the jobs and housing crises on his predecessor, saying that his habit of "forever shifting blame to the last administration, is getting old. The man assumed office almost four years ago — isn't it about time he assumed responsibility?"

Ryan then noted that Obama, while campaigning for president, promised that a GM plant in Wisconsin would not shut down. "That plant didn't last another year. It is locked up and empty to this day. And that's how it is in so many towns today, where the recovery that was promised is nowhere in sight," Ryan said.

Except Obama didn't promise that. And the plant closed in December 2008 -- while George W. Bush was president.

It was just one of several striking and demonstrably misleading elements of Ryan's much-anticipated acceptance speech. And it comes just days after Romney pollster Neil Newhouse warned, defending the campaign's demonstrably false ads claiming Obama removed work requirements from welfare, **"We're not going to let our campaign be dictated by fact-checkers."**

Ryan, for his part, slammed the president for not supporting a deficit commission report without mentioning that he himself had voted against it, helping to kill it.

He also made a cornerstone of his argument the claim that Obama "funneled" \$716 billion out of Medicare to pay for Obamacare. But he didn't mention that his own budget plan relies on those very same savings.

Ryan also put responsibility for Standard & Poor's downgrade of U.S. government debt at Obama's doorstep. But he didn't mention that S&P itself, in explaining its downgrade, referred to the debt ceiling standoff. That process of raising the debt ceiling was only politicized in the last Congress, driven by House Republicans, led in the charge by Paul Ryan.

The credit rater also said it worried that Republicans would never agree to tax increases. "We have changed our assumption on [revenue] because the majority of Republicans in Congress continue to resist any measure that would raise revenues," S&P wrote.

Jodie Layton, a convention goer from Utah watching the Ryan speech, said she was blown away by the vice presidential candidate. But she said she was surprised to hear that after his speech about taking responsibility, he'd pinned a Bush-era plant closing on Obama.

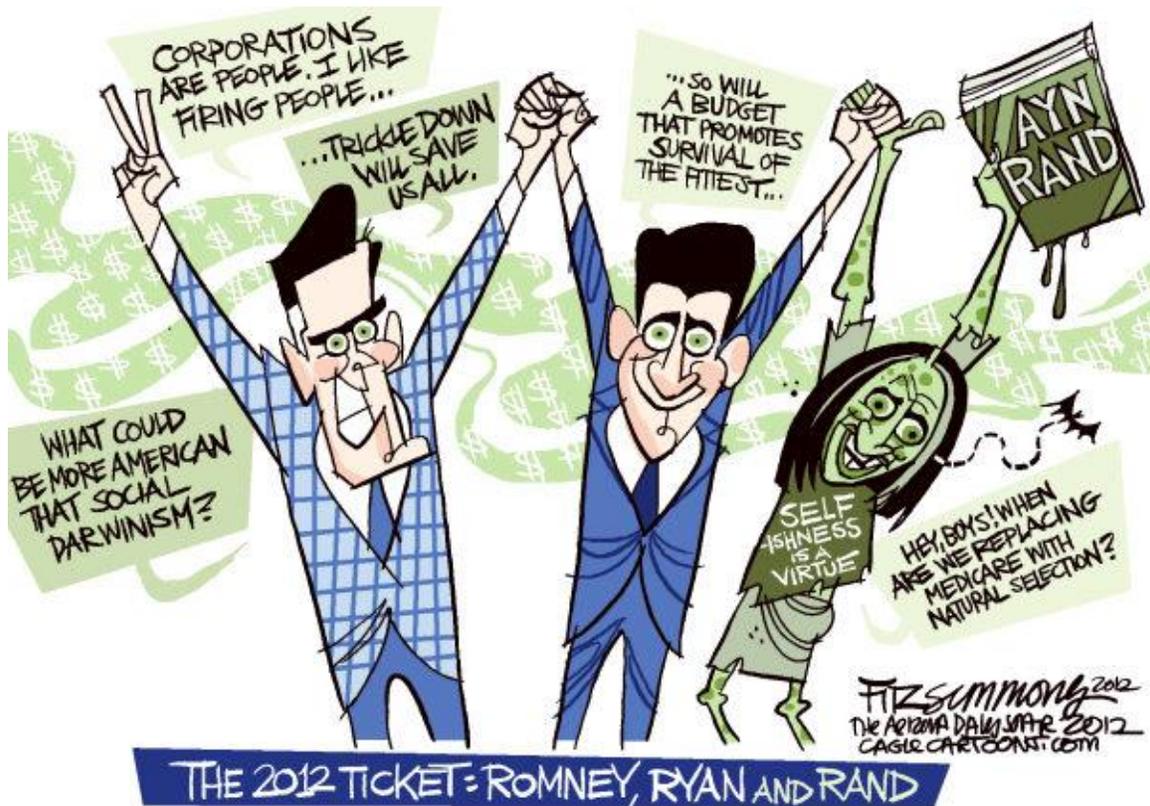
"It closed in December 2008?" she asked, making sure she heard a HuffPost reporter's question right. After a long pause, she said, "It's happening a lot on both sides. It's to be expected."

Ryan has referenced the GM plant before, and his attack was debunked by the Detroit News, which called it inaccurate. "In fact, Obama made no such promise and the plant halted production in December 2008, when President George W. Bush was in office," Detroit News reporter David Sherpardson wrote earlier this month. "Obama did speak at the plant in February 2008, and suggested that a government partnership with automakers could keep the plant open, but made no promises as Ryan suggested."

After the speech, CNN's political commentators focused mostly on Ryan's misstatements, demonstrating the degree to which they were evident.

Top Obama adviser David Axelrod jumped on the GM factory claim. "Again, Ryan blames Obama for a GM plant that closed under Bush. But then, they did say they wouldn't let fact checkers get in the way."

Ryan, however, appears to have made the calculation that the misleading won't hurt him with voters. He might be right. CNN's David Gergen, while acknowledging some "misstatements" in Ryan's address, suggested that pundits focus elsewhere. "But let's not forget that this was a speech about big ideas," he told his audience.



[20120829-01](#) 08:53 Pam Re: "Church Can't Collect Ref. 74 Donations" (reply to SteveG, FotM Newsletter #214)

Here's what I don't understand. The way the media carries on, it seems there's a direct correlation between how much money is spent on a cause and the number of votes for that cause. Does this mean people are selling their votes? I don't think so, so what's the connection between spending and voting? They say negative ads work. Does that mean the electorate is so unsophisticated that they can't see through the hype? Is anyone but the already committed influenced at all by political advertising? I can see how the debates would be important, but the notion that big spending equals political power tells me there's something rotten in Denmark. Exactly how do dollars translate into votes?

[20120829-04](#) 10:51 Art Re: "Church Can't Collect Ref. 74 Donations" (reply to Pam, above)

Yes.

[20120829-02](#) 09:11 SteveB Fw: CREDO Action Petition: Tell Duke Energy to Stop Funding ALEC!

from CREDO Action:

For years, the right wing has been trying to stop people of color, young people, and seniors from voting in order to help Republicans get elected — and now some of America's biggest companies, like Duke Energy, are helping them do it.¹

Duke has helped pass discriminatory voter ID legislation by funding a rightwing policy group called the American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC). Voter ID bills linked to ALEC have already passed in seven states, and similar voter ID bills have been introduced in 27 other states.

That's why we're joining our friends at Color of Change and a growing coalition of civil rights and environmental organizations calling on Duke Energy to end its support of this rightwing organization.

The American Legislative Exchange Council has successfully promoted voter ID legislation that has the potential to disenfranchise up to 5 million voters — especially people of color, young people, and seniors. It also orchestrates extreme anti-environment legislation across the country that lets major polluters off the hook. I urge you to immediately and permanently stop funding ALEC.

Tell Duke Energy to stop funding ALEC and its attempt to disenfranchise millions of voters. Click here to sign the petition:

https://act.credoaction.com/campaign/duke_alec/.

Supporters of discriminatory voter ID laws claim they want to reduce voter fraud (individuals voting illegally, or voting twice). But such fraud almost never actually occurs, and never in numbers large enough to affect the result of elections. What is clear is that voter ID laws prevent large numbers of eligible voters from casting a ballot, and could disenfranchise up to 5 million people.

The truth is that voter ID laws are discriminatory — African Americans, Latinos, seniors, students, and the poor are all less likely to have the photo IDs necessary to vote under these laws. For example, if you've recently moved because of foreclosure or some other economic circumstance, you're more likely to have an address that is not your current residence on your driver's license. If you don't have a car, you're less likely to have a driver's license in the first place.

ALEC's voter ID laws are undemocratic, unjust and part of a longstanding rightwing agenda to weaken the voting blocs that historically oppose Republican candidates. We have to expose the major companies like Duke Energy that are helping ALEC suppress the votes of millions of Americans before it's too late.

Tell Duke Energy to stop funding ALEC and its attempt to disenfranchise millions of voters. Click here to automatically sign the petition.

In addition to Duke Energy's role in funding ALEC's voter suppression attempts, Duke is also a member of ALEC's Environment, Energy and Agriculture Task Force, which shapes ALEC's climate change denial and dirty energy agenda. Legislation drafted and supported by this task force undermines local environmental protections, thwarts efforts to address climate change and prevents major polluters from being held accountable.²

ALEC's extreme anti-environment efforts, which Duke Energy plays a key role in shaping and supporting, directly contradict Duke's frequently stated support for legislation to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and fight climate change.³

In the past, Duke has been sensitive to public pressure calling out its hypocrisy on environmental issues. In 2009, after the American Coalition for Clean Coal Electricity was embroiled in a forgery scandal intended to mislead members of Congress about pending federal climate change legislation, Duke parted ways with the group, saying its activities were "not consistent with Duke Energy's work to pass economy-wide and cost effective climate change legislation as soon as possible."⁴

The same is now true of Duke's support for the American Legislative Exchange Council.

We hope Duke Energy will simply do the right thing and stop supporting ALEC. If they don't, we'll be prepared to shine a spotlight on them and make sure the world understands what they're involved in.

Josh Nelson, Campaign Manager

Sources:

¹ALEC Corporations, SourceWatch, <http://act.credoaction.com/r/?r=5545776&id=45944-5766577-hj73Ayx&t=12>.

²Environment, Energy and Agriculture, ALEC Exposed, <http://act.credoaction.com/r/?r=6946689&id=45944-5766577-hj73Ayx&t=13>.

³Climate Change, Duke Energy, <http://act.credoaction.com/r/?r=6946690&id=45944-5766577-hj73Ayx&t=14>.

⁴Duke Energy Quits Controversial Coal Lobby Front Group, Huffington Post, 9/2/09, <http://act.credoaction.com/r/?r=6946691&id=45944-5766577-hj73Ayx&t=15>.

20120829-08 13:24 SteveG Fw: MoveOn Action: Watch "The Man from Bloomfield Hills"!
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from MoveOn.org:

The story of Mitt...

Polls show that our efforts to redefine Mitt Romney as the candidate of the 1% have been effective, but at this week's Republican Convention, Mitt's got one more chance to re-introduce himself to the country.¹ He's running a three-day advertising campaign, with prime time media coverage, to convince voters that he's actually concerned about the average citizen.

But that's a lie we're not going to let him tell.

This Thursday, we're releasing "The Man from Bloomfield Hills," a hilarious mini-doc based on the true story of Mitt's hardscrabble upbringing in one of the wealthiest towns in the U.S. The "mockumentary" is in the style of other candidate biographies shown at conventions, and is told from the perspective of the people who know Mitt best, including his wife Ann Romney.

To celebrate the release, and to coincide with Romney's acceptance of the Republican nomination, we're having an online watch party Thursday evening. Will you watch with us? Click here to view the trailer and RSVP for the online watch party:

<http://www.manfrombloomfieldhills.com/>.

Thanks for all you do. –Lenore, Victoria, Mark, Carrie, and the rest of the team

Source:

¹"Poll: Mitt Romney better for the rich," Politico, Aug. 27, 2012, <http://www.moveon.org/r/?r=279545&id=50069-20195165-eiJULAx&t=1>.

20120829-03 10:49 SteveB From the Right: "The War on Drugs: Because Prohibition Worked So Well..."
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"The War on Drugs: Because Prohibition Worked So Well..." by John Stossel, Human Events

Aug. 29, 2012, (<http://www.humanevents.com/2012/08/29/stossel-the-war-on-drugs-because-prohibition-worked-so-well/>)

Forty years ago, the United States locked up fewer than 200 of every 100,000 Americans. Then President Nixon declared war on drugs. Now we lock up more of our people than any other country — more even than the authoritarian regimes in Russia and China.

A war on drugs — on people, that is — is unworthy of a country that claims to be free.

Unfortunately, this outrage probably won't be discussed in Tampa or Charlotte.

The media (including Fox News) run frightening stories about Mexican cocaine cartels and marijuana gangs. Few of my colleagues stop to think that this is a consequence of the war, that decriminalization would end the violence. There are no wine "cartels" or beer "gangs." No one "smuggles" liquor. Liquor dealers are called "businesses," not "gangs," and they "ship" products instead of "smuggling" them. They settle disputes with lawyers rather than guns.

Everything can be abused, but that doesn't mean government can stop it. Government runs amok when it tries to protect us from ourselves.

Drug-related crime occurs because the drugs are available only through the artificially expensive black market. Drug users steal not because drugs drive them to steal. Our government says heroin and nicotine are similarly addictive, but no one robs convenience stores to get Marlboros. (That could change with confiscatory tobacco taxes.)

Are defenders of the drug war aware of the consequences? I don't think so.

John McWhorter, a senior fellow at the Manhattan Institute, indicts the drug war for "destroying black America." McWhorter, by the way, is black.

McWhorter sees prohibition as the saboteur of black families. "Enduring prison time is seen as a badge of strength. It's regarded (with some justification) as an unjust punishment for selling people something they want. The ex-con is a hero rather than someone who went the wrong way."

He enumerates the positive results from ending prohibition. "No more gang wars over turf, no more kids shooting each other. ... Men get jobs, as they did in the old days, even in the worst ghettos, because they have to."

Would cheaper and freely available drugs bring their own catastrophe? "Our discomfort with the idea of heroin available at drugstores is similar to that of a Prohibitionist shuddering at the thought of bourbon at the corner store. We'll get over it."

The media tell us that some drugs are so powerful that one "hit" or "snort" will hook the user forever. But the government's own statistics disprove that. The National Institutes of Health found that 36 million Americans have tried crack. But only 12 percent have used it in the previous year, and fewer than 6 percent have used it in the previous month. If crack is so addictive, how did 88 percent of the users quit?

If drugs were legal, I suppose that at first more people would try them. But most would give them up. Eventually, drug use would diminish, as it has in Portugal, which decriminalized all drugs, and the Netherlands, which allows legal marijuana. More young men would find real jobs; police could focus on real crime.

When the public is this divided about an issue, it's best left to voluntary social pressure instead of legal enforcement. That's how most Americans decide whether to drink alcohol or go to church every week. Private voluntary social networks have their own ways of punishing bad behavior and send more nuanced messages about what's unacceptable. Government's one-size-fits-all rules don't improve on that.

"Once the principle is admitted that it is the duty of the government to protect the individual against his own foolishness," economist Ludwig von Mises wrote, "why not prevent him from reading bad books and bad plays ... ? The mischief done by bad ideologies is more pernicious ... than that done by narcotic drugs."

If we adults own our own bodies, we ought to get to control what we put in them. It's legitimate for government to protect me from reckless drivers and drunken airline pilots — but not to protect me from myself.

"RNC vs DNC – Will Medical Marijuana Decide the Election?" by Steph Sherer, OpEdNews

Aug. 29, 2012, (<http://www.opednews.com/articles/RNC-vs-DNC--Will-Medical-by-Steph-Sherer-120828-535.html>)

**CAN
BROKEN
PROMISES
LOSE
AN ELECTION**

**1 MILLION
MEDICAL MARIJUANA PATIENTS AND
THEIR FAMILIES WILL DECIDE!**

Obama promised the American people that he would lead his agencies based on science and not political ideology, and promised not to interfere with state medical marijuana laws. He has broken both promises. It's his administration's policy that marijuana has no medical value and is more dangerous than methamphetamines. In the first 3.5 years of President Obama, the DEA has raided more medical marijuana facilities than in 8 years of Bush. For this election, 1 million legal medical marijuana patients and their families are being asked to put politics before their health. Tell Obama patients count!

CampWakeUpObama.com

Americans For Safe Access
Advancing Legal Medical Marijuana Therapeutics and Research

ASA Poster by Americans For Safe Access (<http://safeaccessnow.org/>)

This week, as the average American begins to pay close attention to the Presidential race during the party conventions, my organization, Americans for Safe Access, is preparing to flood America -- and especially swing states -- with a poster that asks the question, "Can Broken Promises Lose an Election? 1 Million Medical Marijuana

Patients Will Decide." This message is controversial, and many liberals who support President Barack Obama as well as compassionate use are asking why we are targeting a President who once made the boldest pro-access statement in history.

We are sending a message to President Obama and his supporters because he is our President, and his decisions have grave consequences for medical cannabis patients. His administration has rejected our petition to overturn the federal definition of marijuana as without "accepted medical use in the United States" -- a decision that we will challenge in court on October 16th. Obama's administration has raided more medical marijuana facilities in three and a half years than Bush's administration did in eight. And his appointed US Attorneys are shutting down dispensaries left and right, including model operations whose medicine is a lifeline for patients.

ASA has been accused of creating a propaganda campaign that will help Mitt Romney. But that's not the reality on the ground. We are hearing from our grassroots -- and reading in polls -- that medical marijuana patients and their loved ones are considering voting for third-party candidates or not voting at all. This trend is most pronounced in the medical cannabis states that are also swing states, like Colorado and Nevada. In a close election, a few percentage points peeled off to a third party could make the difference in the Electoral College, and we want to wake Obama up to that fact.

Medical marijuana does not have to be a partisan issue -- lawmakers on the Republican side of the aisle have supported and led efforts to respect state laws on compassionate use in state capitols and in Congress. Republicans and Republicans-turned-Independents such as Ron Paul and Lincoln Chaffee have vocally supported medical cannabis access and efforts to reschedule cannabis in the Controlled Substances Act -- a position we will advance in court just weeks before the election.

Medical marijuana patients are sick and tired of being sick and tired. We don't want our issue to be treated like a criminal justice issue, but as a healthcare issue. We need leadership that respects our medical needs. Obama's biggest mistake was trying to deal with medical cannabis in a piecemeal memo. He should have put together a team of agencies along with governors of medical cannabis states to find a long-term solution.

This is not in my control, it is in Obama's hands. If I tried to rally support for Obama, I wouldn't get very far, because the patients and their supporters who tell pollsters they support third-party candidates wouldn't listen. If Obama doesn't wake up to the needs of medical marijuana patients with an indication that his hard line could be softened, these votes will be lost.

That is why I and other medical cannabis supporters are distributing posters throughout the nation. We want Obama's campaign to know that the reason they aren't meeting their volunteer goals in deep-blue counties, or are uncomfortably close in polls in key swing states, is because people who would otherwise be strong supporters are finding this President's policies on cannabis too hard to swallow. And we want Republicans to know that our movement is not just a wing of Democratic party: we are looking for compassionate leadership where we can find it.

It's not too late for the President to turn this around. We want to hear that the Obama administration's historically harsh crackdown on medical cannabis access will be reconsidered, and only then we can begin efforts at rallying supporting in states like Colorado and Nevada. With polls showing the public's overwhelming acceptance of state compassionate use laws, and with an outdated Controlled Substances Act the subject of our court battle in October, there is no reason for President Obama to go down in history as America's latest hardline drug warrior.

If the subject of our posters bothers you, please e-mail the Obama campaign and not me. I am just articulating the sentiment of the one million legal medical marijuana patients. Only Obama can ask for their votes.

20120829-05

11:17 Art

"GOP Platform Through the Years Shows Party's Shift from Moderate to Conservative"

Saw this in an article this morning in the *Washington Post*. Think it may best explain in a few words why former Republican conservatives like me made the jump. Said another way, the party has been taken over by the whackadoos.

"The Republican Party, viewed through its quadrennial platform documents, is consistently business-oriented and committed to a strong defense, but has morphed over the past half-century from a socially moderate, environmentally progressive and fiscally cautious group to a conservative party that is suspicious of government, allied against abortion and motivated by faith."

"GOP Platform Through the Years Shows Party's Shift from Moderate to Conservative" by Marc Fisher, *The Washington Post*

Aug. 28, 2012, (http://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/gop-platform-through-the-years-shows-partys-shift-from-moderate-to-conservative/2012/08/28/09094512-ed70-11e1-b09d-07d971dee30a_story.html)

The word "abortion" does not appear in a Republican Party platform until 1976, when the party concedes that it is deeply split between those who support "abortion on demand" and those who seek to protect the lives of the unborn.

The quest for lower taxes does not define Republicanism until the 1980s, and matters of faith play almost no role in the GOP's plank until the 1990s.

The Republican Party, viewed through its quadrennial platform documents, is consistently business-oriented and committed to a strong defense, but has morphed over the past half-century from a socially moderate, environmentally progressive and fiscally cautious group to a conservative party that is suspicious of government, allied against abortion and motivated by faith.

Influenced by the rise of tea party activists, this year's platform, adopted Tuesday at the Republican National Convention in Tampa, has shifted to the right, particularly on fiscal issues. It calls for an audit of the Federal Reserve and a commission to study returning to the gold standard. There are odes of fidelity to the Constitution but also calls for amendments that would balance the federal budget, require a two-thirds majority in Congress to raise taxes and define marriage as a union between one man and one woman.

The new plank urges the transformation of Medicare from an entitlement to a system of personal accounts, increased use of coal for energy and a ban on federal funding to universities that give illegal immigrants in-state tuition rates.

House Speaker John A. Boehner (Ohio) expressed skepticism that the lengthy recitation of the party's positions has much meaning or function.

"Anybody read the party platform? I never met anybody," Boehner told reporters. He said the document should be no more than one page. "That way, Americans could actually read it."

Party platforms are not easy to digest. They are the meat missing from a campaign menu dominated by sweet and sour TV commercials. Platforms are aspirational laundry lists, packed with sops to every interest group that makes up a modern party. But in retrospect, they provide a good guide to where a party is heading.

What it means to be a Republican has changed enormously over the past half-century. The GOP opposed a Palestinian state as late as 1992, went silent on the issue for eight years, then endorsed the idea in its past two planks. During the George H.W. Bush presidency, Republicans acknowledged global warming and boasted of efforts to commit billions of federal dollars to finding solutions. The party then spent two election cycles saying there was too much "scientific uncertainty" before accepting in 2008 that humans have a role in altering the climate.

The GOP, like its opposition, has responded to ideological, demographic and social changes by hardening some of its positions and adopting entirely new planks, all part of an effort to create a coalition capable of winning national elections. In the Republicans' case, that meant adapting and appealing to a new base in the South from the 1970s forward, becoming the dominant party of white suburbia, and finding ways to marry its traditional pro-business foundation with less affluent, more socially conservative voters.

Many positions Republicans often tout as traditionally conservative are actually relatively new to GOP ideology. Indeed, although the party's stance on the issues has shifted rightward over the past 20 years, Republicans have studiously avoided using the word "conservative" in platforms.

For decades, the party presented itself as "moderate" or even "progressive." The 1960 plank, for example, touts "progressive Republican policies" such as "liberal pay" and says the government "must be truly progressive as an employer."

In 1972, the platform celebrates Republicans' use of wage and price controls to curb inflation, a doubling of federal spending on manpower training, and a tripling of help to minorities.

Even the party's most conservative platforms avoid that word, which first appears in 1992. From the 1960s to 2008, platforms liberally criticize "liberals," but "conservative" is used almost exclusively to refer to judges.

From the 1960s through the '80s, each plank reads like a snapshot of its time, capturing the frustrations of the party or the pride of those in power, sometimes wryly needling Democrats, other years slamming them hard. But from the 1990s forward, the platforms exhibit a sameness of rhetorical style, a reflection of the cut-and-paste reality of the computer age, in which entire sentences appear over and over in successive planks.

Even as ritual expressions of solidarity with the Philippines or calls to abolish inheritance taxes survive each round of platform construction, the party line changes markedly on many issues.

For decades, Republicans emphasize federal funding for public transit. Then, in 1980, a turn: "Republicans reject the elitist notion that Americans must be forced out of their cars. Instead, we vigorously support the right of personal mobility and freedom as exemplified by the automobile."

Throughout the 1960s and '70s, the GOP platform includes vigorous support for an equal-rights amendment to protect women. Then, in 1980, the party stalemates: "We acknowledge the legitimate efforts of those who support or oppose ratification."

In the 1960s and '70s, the party positions itself as a strong advocate for D.C. voting rights, in the Senate as well as the House. Then, in 1980, all mention of voting rights vanishes; the subject has not appeared since.

The first appearance of the abortion issue represents a party very much split between business-oriented moderates and religious conservatives: Abortion "is undoubtedly a moral and personal issue" on which Republicans disagree, the 1976 plank says.

Four years later, the issue has been settled: The GOP seeks a constitutional amendment protecting "the right to life for unborn children." By 1992, the platform includes a call to appoint judges who oppose abortion.

Words such as "faith" and "heritage" rarely appear until the 1980s. (In 2000, religion plays an even larger role in the platform as the party goes beyond supporting prayer in public schools by seeking to allow them to post the Ten Commandments.)

The 1960 plank calls for government workers to receive "salaries which are comparable to those offered by private employers." In 1984, public-sector workers are redubbed "bureaucrats" and "Washington's governing elite," and are blamed for "an epidemic of crime, a massive increase in dependency and the slumming of our cities." Republicans pledge a major cut in the government workforce.

The watershed platform of 1980 introduces tax cuts and an increasingly critical attitude toward government. "The Republican Party declares war on government overregulation," it says.

Antipathy toward high taxes strengthens, resulting in 1992 in an explanation of how lowering taxes on the wealthy would lead to job creation, adding a simple declaration: "We will oppose any attempt to increase taxes."

The platforms of 1980 and 1992 are the party's big pivots, both in positions and rhetoric. But the roots of today's Republicanism become clear during the 1964 conservative uprising that led to Barry Goldwater's presidential nomination.

In 1960, Republicans give "firm support" to "the union shop and other forms of union security" and say that "Republican conscience and Republican policy require that the annual number of immigrants we accept be at least doubled." Four years later, the GOP bashes Democrats for being "federal extremists" wedded to an ever more intrusive central government. (Calls to limit benefits for illegal immigrants and deny citizenship to U.S.-born children whose parents arrived here illegally enter the platform in 1996.)

The optimism of 1960 — brimming with hope about new nations, weapons and ideas — gives way four years later to worry about "moral decline and drift" born of "indifference to national ideals rounded in devoutly held religious faith." Suddenly, faith is at the core of Republicanism: The 1960 plank says nothing about religion; four years later, "faith" is one of the most frequently used words, along with "heritage" and "freedom."

In 1960, the platform calls for "vigorous support of court orders for school desegregation" and affirms the rights of civil rights protesters. The 1964 plank calls for "discouraging lawlessness and violence" and "opposing federally sponsored 'inverse discrimination.'"

The shift in substance comes with a notable pivot in tone. From the 1960 platform: "We have no wish to exaggerate differences between ourselves and the Democratic Party." Four years later: "Let the Democratic Party stand accused."

On foreign policy, Republicans remain mostly consistent, calling for increased defense spending to combat communism. But the 1964 plank foreshadows the skepticism about the United Nations that would become a GOP mainstay from the 1990s forward. In 1960, the party pledges to "support and strengthen the U.N." Four years later, it warns that "Republicans will never surrender to any international group the responsibility of the United States for its sovereignty."

If the fiery rhetoric of 1964 presaged the Reagan and tea party revolutions, the path was not smooth. The Richard M. Nixon years brought a return — in the platform, if not in the coarser approach revealed in the Nixon White House tapes — of a more moderate message.

The 1968 platform would strike many voters today as a Democratic agenda — addressing air and water pollution, crowded slums, and discrimination against minorities, all with "a new mix of private responsibility and public participation in the solution of social problems."

The '68 plank also proposes to expand Social Security by lowering the age for universal coverage from 72 to 65. Future platforms remain supportive of maintaining benefits until 2004, when the party endorses George W. Bush's proposal to shift to personal retirement accounts.

But amid that progressive Republicanism, the roots of the culture wars to come poke through the soil. The '72 platform opposes quotas to achieve racial balance in college admissions and hiring, and rails against liberal hegemony on campuses. (That theme remains through 2008, when the platform says that "leftist dogmatism dominates many institutions.")

By 1992, "family values" become a major theme. The platform states that "the media, the entertainment industry, academia and the Democrat Party are waging a guerrilla war against American values." (That abbreviated version of the other party's name, without the "-ic" suffix, appears for the first time in 1976, an early sign of the sniping that has come to dominate interparty rhetoric.)

The '92 plank, the first to mention same-sex relationships, rejects any recognition of gay marriage or allowing same-sex couples to adopt children or become foster parents. The stand against adoption and foster care does not reappear.

The passage about marriage grows longer and more strident every four years, culminating in the 2004 call, echoed in 2008, for the amendment defining marriage as the union of a man and a woman. From 1996 through 2008, Republicans repeat that "homosexuality is incompatible with military service."

The GOP also evolves on campaign finance. In 1992, it calls for reforms that include the elimination of "political action committees supported by corporations, unions or trade associations." By 2000, that position morphs into one championing "the right of every individual and all groups to express their opinions and advocate their issues" — a veiled reference to efforts to eliminate limits on campaign contributions.

And the party's attitude on the balance between civil liberties and aggressive security measures shifts dramatically after the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2001. The 1996 and 2000 platforms oppose President Bill Clinton's decision to close Pennsylvania Avenue in front of the White House, promising to reopen the street. But later platforms embrace George W. Bush's emphasis on the vigorous expansion of the government's role in homeland security.

(Rosalind S. Helderman and Karen Tumulty in Tampa contributed to this report.)

[20120829-10](#) 14:54 Pam Re: "GOP Platform Through the Years..." (reply to Art, above)

I actually think this phenomenon goes far beyond the Republican party; I think it is world-wide. Europe has Jean-Marie la Pen, and Holland has politicians who are as informed about pregnancy as Mr. Akin. "Modern" Islamic countries are being taken over by reactionary fundamentalists, and humanity seems divided between the haters/fearers and the Kantian followers of the Golden Rule. We are indeed one world, more so now than ever, and our politics reflect that, not just in the U.S. but across the globe. I feel a paradigm shift coming on.

[20120829-06](#) 12:35 SteveB "Welcome to GOP Nutland!"

"Welcome to GOP Nutland!" by Jim Hightower, NationofChange

Aug. 29, 2012, (<http://www.nationofchange.org/welcome-gop-nutland-1346246625>)

While it's hard to fathom right-wing nuttiness, it's sure not hard to find these days.

We saw it bloom spectacularly recently, popping right out of the head of Todd Akin, the GOP's Senate candidate in Missouri. The learned congressman gave America a twisted tutorial on the imaginary science of "legitimate rape," including an astonishing assertion of his belief in medical mojo. Akin explained that raped women don't get pregnant because — according to his grasp of reproductive science — the female body has ways "to shut that whole thing down."

Whoa! Screamed Mitt Romney and the entire Republican hierarchy, as they rushed to declare Akin out-of-bounds, unacceptable and ... well, nutty.

But wait. Guess who's presently cosponsoring legislation with Akin to impose this theological witchcraft on America's women? Why it's Romney's choice to hold the second-highest office in our nation, VP nominee Paul Ryan. Like his buddy Todd, Ryan has sponsored many bills to deny abortion to victims of rape.

Now, guess which party has just fully embraced Akin's nuttiness by including his absolutist "no-abortion-even-in-the-case-of-rape" provision in its national platform? Yes, the Romney-Ryan Republicans. Yet, that same party's panicked Poobahs have pronounced Akin's views so extreme that he should withdraw from the Missouri Senate race. Excuse me, but — logically speaking — doesn't that mean Ryan should also withdraw from his race?

Of course, in the fantasy universe of the far right, logic is an alien intruder, barred from interfering with either approved doctrine or political expediency. Indeed, here's their idea of logic: Akin, a devout worshipper of junk science, is a member of the House Committee on Science. Go figure.

And if you find that surreal, let me add that his committee assignment is hardly the only illogical perversion in the doctrinal right's carefully constructed NutLand.

Michele Bachmann, for example, is a member of the House Intelligence Committee.

While Akin's pseudo-scientific tommyrot about "legitimate rape" has surged him into the lead for the title of Dottiest and Most Dangerous Political Nut of the Year, never count out us Texans in any hard-nut contest.

Our state's DMDPNY front-runner had been Ted Cruz, currently the GOP candidate for U.S. Senate, who's deeply concerned that the United Nations is plotting to take over America's golf courses. Suddenly, however, a dark horse from Lubbock has shot past Cruz and seized the lead. County Judge Tom Head, perhaps suffering from the heat of August, shocked and delighted the right-wing-o-sphere by demonstrating in an Aug. 21 interview that it's actually humanly possible to get even nuttier about President Obama than simply ranting that he's a Kenyan Muslim socialist. I'll let Head speak for himself.

"In this political climate, what is the worst thing that could happen? Obama gets back in the White House," he answered to his own question. "No. God forbid," he added. Why? Plunging deeper into paranoid darkness, Head announced that a re-elected Obama is "going to try to hand over the sovereignty of the United States to the U.N." And that, warned Head, will lead to the worst: "Civil unrest, civil disobedience, civil war, maybe. We're talking Lexington, Concord, take up arms and get rid of the guy. Now what's going to happen if we do that?" asked Head as he built to his logical conclusion: "(Obama's) going to send in U.N. troops."

However, Head (who oversees emergency preparedness in the county) told Lubbockians not to worry, for if they approve a local tax increase, he will use the money to recruit and train more police to combat Obama's diabolical U.N. takeover scheme. "I don't want 'em in Lubbock County," Head said. "So I'm going to stand in front of their armored personnel carrier and say, 'You're not coming in here.'"

Thank you, Judge Head, for showing America just what you're made of: a sack of nuts and a bucket of silly putty.

20120829-07	13:13	SteveG	"Lying for the Lord"
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Interesting...

"Lying for the Lord" by Ken Clark, MormonThink

2008, (<http://www.mormonthink.com/lying.htm>)

Evidence presented in this essay establishes that when the church image or its leaders needed protection it was and is, okay to fib, deceive, distort, inflate, minimize, exaggerate, prevaricate or lie. You will read quotations by church leaders who admitted that deception is a useful tool to protect the church and its leaders "when they are in a tight spot," or "to beat the devil at his own game." They admit engaging in moral gymnastics; that God approves of deception - if it's done to protect the "Lord's Church" or "the brethren" as the leaders are called.

I was stunned after I learned these uncomfortable truths. I had naively believed that when church leaders transgressed, they followed the required steps of repentance, as taught to members and investigators. I believed they had the courage to face their mistakes and confess their shortcomings, no matter what the consequences; to live the same standards they set for the members. I believed they were completely honest.

D. Michael Quinn called the use of deception by LDS church leaders, "theocratic ethics." (The Mormon Hierarchy: Origins of Power, page 112) Smith lied to protect himself or the church; which was an extension of himself. Dan Vogel in his excellent work, Joseph Smith: The Making of a Prophet, described Smith's viewpoint; he was a pious deceiver. Smith used deception if in his mind; it resulted in a good outcome. Smith had Moroni, an ancient American prophet and custodian of the gold plates declare, "And whatsoever thing persuadeth men to do good is of me; for good cometh of none save it be of me. (Moroni 4:11-12). Translation: if deception was necessary to do good, or bring a soul to Christ, then it was worth it, as long as God approves. Smith believed he knew when God approved of lying.

[Continue reading at MormonThink...](#)

[20120829-13](#) 15:06 Pam Re: "Lying for the Lord" (reply to SteveG, above)

It's obvious Romney is a Mormon through and through. He'll say ANYTHING.

[20120829-14](#) 15:10 Dennis Re: "Lying for the Lord" (reply to Pam, above)

And he's so effective. Two years in Paris on his mission and he converted no one!

[20120829-15](#) 15:15 Pam Re: "Lying for the Lord" (reply to Dennis, above)

It is my belief (and I speak for no one else) that the Mormon Church sends young men out on missions to places where they know no one to get them away from the normal temptations young men face. They send them in pairs so they can report on each other. They are not allowed to date during those two years, to say nothing of having a coke or a cup of coffee. I'm all for reigning in young men, but missionaries of all stripes are offensive to me.

[20120829-19](#) 18:14 SteveB Re: "Lying for the Lord" (reply to Pam & Dennis, above)

Can you imagine the difficulty in converting Parisians to Mormonism? Golden plates of Jesus in America? Multiple wives? The French already have that in the form of multiple mistresses.

Why do Mormons even try such a task?

[20120829-21](#) 18:31 Dennis Re: "Lying for the Lord" (reply to SteveB, above)

Like the French would give up drinking wine for some bogus religion. Only a naive Mormon kid would attempt that one.

[20120829-22](#) 19:55 Art Re: "Lying for the Lord" (reply to SteveB, above)

But what a great place to send the rich Mormon elite, especially to avoid the draft.

[20120829-23](#) 20:22 SteveB Re: "Lying for the Lord" (reply to Art, above)

Ya, that's a very slick trick, when you think about it.

Mohammed Ali just needed to be a little more organized. (or not black, or Mormon not Muslim)

The government gave-up long ago messing with something like the Mormon Church. The Church owns half the West, but pays no taxes. What if the Mormon Church is just a another big tax avoidance scheme?

They also still practice polygamy. Someone in Montana gets arrested for it every few months, it seems, always Mormon.

Not that I think religion should be the subject of this election. Jeez! A Muslim against a Jerk...I mean, a Muslim against a Mormon, who's to choose? But, honestly, to me, and not anything to do with the election, the Mormons are a cult. They have all the earmarks.

[20120829-24](#) 20:26 SteveG Re: "Lying for the Lord" (reply to SteveB, above)

Can a Scientologist be far behind?

[20120829-25](#) 20:39 Pam Re: "Lying for the Lord" (reply to SteveG, above)

Peas in a pod.

[20120829-26](#) 20:42 SteveB Re: "Lying for the Lord" (reply to SteveG & Pam, above)

Scientologists invented the cultish earmarks. But it's a perfect fit for Tom Cruise...short!

[20120829-09](#) 14:54 SteveG "Fact Check: Christie's Keynote Address"

"Fact Check: Christie's Keynote Address" by Eugene Kiely and Lori Robertson, [FactCheck.org](http://www.factcheck.org)

Aug. 29, 2012, (<http://www.usatoday.com/news/politics/story/2012-08-29/christie-keynote-fact-check-rnc/57400644/1>)

New Jersey Gov. Chris Christie largely avoided factual claims in a Republican convention keynote address that was heavy on generalities, opinion and platitudes. The pugnacious former prosecutor exaggerated a bit, though, when he bragged about his accomplishments as governor, and he repeated the common but false claim that the president's health care law interferes with the doctor-patient relationship.

- Christie said he delivered "three balanced budgets with lower taxes." Actually, he cut the state Earned Income Tax Credit for low-income residents and the popular property-tax rebate program for renters and homeowners. It's a matter of interpretation whether those are tax hikes or spending reductions. A proposed 10% income tax cut hasn't been enacted.
- He said he took on public-sector unions to reform a pension system "headed to bankruptcy" and "saved retirees their pension." That's accurate as far as it goes. But the state is not fully funding the revamped system, and the pension liabilities gap will begin to grow again.
- Regarding teachers, Christie said he ended "the guarantee of a job for life regardless of performance." That's correct. Christie worked with a Democratic Legislature to make significant changes to the tenure system — even providing a path to fire tenured teachers with negative evaluations.
- On state taxes, Christie said "we have three balanced budgets with lower taxes." First of all, New Jersey, like many states, requires a balanced budget. But did he balance the budget "with lower taxes"? He did sign into law some business tax incentives, but broad-based income and sales taxes have not changed. He has proposed lowering income taxes by 10% across the board, but that measure has yet to pass.

In fact, Christie has cut state payments that his critics say amount to tax increases. He cut more than \$800 million from the state's popular property-tax rebate program in his fiscal year 2011 budget. The *Star-Ledger* reported that Christie "eliminated rebates for nearly 103,700 renters and cut rebates for everybody else by 75%." He increased funding for the program in fiscal 2012, but has not fully restored the cuts.

Christie also cut the state Earned Income Tax Credit from 25% of the federal benefit to 20% in fiscal 2011, and later vetoed a bill to restore it. The left-leaning New Jersey Policy Perspective estimates that the \$100 million cut over two years has reduced tax credits by \$200 per family.

Christie has made some sweeping changes in state pensions and teacher tenure rules in a state with strong labor unions.

The governor said he overhauled the state's pension system and "saved retirees their pension." As we have reported before, Christie last year signed a law that required public employees to pay more into the pension system, suspended cost of living increases for retirees, and reduced the state's growing unfunded pension liabilities.

But four months later, the *Star-Ledger* wrote — in a story headlined "Christie's overhaul may not save N.J. pension system" — that the state was underfunding the pension system and, as a result, the unfunded liabilities gap would begin to widen again.

The paper said, "The 'unfunded liability' — the difference between how much the pension system has and what has been promised to current and future retirees — dropped from \$53.9 billion to \$35.4 billion after the law was signed, the state said in bond documents. But because the state won't be making full pension payments, the gap will swell again to \$58 billion by 2019, according to the state's estimates."

Fred Beaver, a former state pension director, told the *Star-Ledger* the governor's changes were "admirable" but ultimately "paper reform" unless the state makes its payments.

On the other hand, the *Star-Ledger* called the governor's overhaul of the state's tenure laws "dramatic."

Star-Ledger, June 25, 2012: The bill would make a series of dramatic changes to a law first enacted in 1909. The most important would institute a new system of yearly evaluations for teachers and principals based partly on growth in student test scores — a move that sets New Jersey on the same path as Indiana, New York, Washington, D.C., and others....

But any teacher, regardless of seniority, could be fired after two years of negative evaluations. Disputes would be handled through arbitration instead of administrative law judges, which proponents say would drive down costs for school districts that can get enmeshed in costly battles.

Christie also repeated a false claim about the health care law interfering with doctor-patient relationships.

Christie: Romney will tell us the hard truths we need to hear to end the debacle of putting the world's greatest health care system in the hands of federal bureaucrats and putting those bureaucrats between an American citizen and her doctor.

As we just said in our first item on the convention, the Affordable Care Act doesn't create a government-run system, like that of Britain or Canada, nor does it regulate the work of doctors. Republicans often call the Independent Payment Advisory Board, which would recommend ways to slow the growth of Medicare spending, "bureaucrats" that would ration care. But the IPAB, made up of health care professionals, economists and others, wouldn't have the power to do that, according to the law.

20120829-11	14:55	Dennis	"The Recovery Is Beginning"
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If Obama is doing so poorly, according to every GOP Convention speaker, why are investment letters saying the opposite?

"The Recovery Is Beginning" by Marc Lichtenfeld, Investment U

Aug. 29, 2012, (<http://www.investментu.com/2012/August/the-recovery-is-beginning.html>)

Ever since the financial system was on the brink of complete collapse four years ago, it's been a tough slog. But that shouldn't be unexpected. This was no ordinary recession.

When someone recovers from the flu, it takes a week or two before they're feeling 100%. On the other hand if someone was in intensive care with double pneumonia, it's going to be quite a while before they're feeling back to themselves.

Well, in 2008 and early 2009, not only was the U.S. economy in intensive care with double pneumonia, but Presidents Bush and Obama, along with Hank Paulson had to break out the defibrillator a few times to revive the patient. The recuperation process was going to be long.

But now the patient is home, up and moving around again and on the road to recovery. There's still a long way to go, but make no mistake about it – things are improving:

- In August, building permits were up 6.8% from last year.
- Employers added 163,000 jobs in July, higher than the 73,000 average from April – June.
- Timber company Weyerhaeuser (NYSE: WY), whose revenue is 84% tied to housing, saw second quarter revenue higher than it has been in several years.
- More employees are going on strike. According to Barron's, RBC Global Asset Management noted that there have been 17 incidences of walkouts with 1,000 or more employees – the highest since 2004-2005. That's a sign of confidence on the part of labor.
- In South Florida, one of the hardest hit areas by the popping of the real estate bubble, there are so many new construction projects in my small town, it's hard to keep track.
- Brand new buildings are going up to house restaurants including McDonald's (NYSE: MCD) and YUM! Brands' (NYSE: YUM) Taco Bell. Toys R Us is expanding its store. New strip malls are being constructed when just two years ago, existing ones were vacant.
- Housing prices in South Florida rose 2.8% in July, the eight consecutive monthly increase. This is a market where a year ago, you couldn't give a house away.
- And in some parts of Northern California, housing is back to the fervor experienced during the dot come days. A realtor told me of a friend who bid on a house only to be one of 25 people making an offer. Another worked with a client on a condo that received seven offers and went for 9% above the asking price. She now has a client bidding more than 12% above what the seller is asking for.

Last week, I talked about following the smart money. If anyone qualifies as smart money, it's the management of companies like McDonald's, YUM! Brands and Weyerhaeuser.

Intel (Nasdaq: INTC), the world's largest semiconductor maker is investing \$300 million into a new facility in Chandler, AZ. General Motors (NYSE: GM) will spend \$220 million at two factories in Ohio. In October, Tanger Factory Outlet (NYSE: SKT) and Simon Property Group (NYSE: SPG) will jointly open a 350,000 square foot retail center in Texas.

Surprise! Stocks are up 20% this year...

Things obviously aren't all lollipops and rainbows. There are still way too many people who need work and are struggling. We continue to have real problems that need to be tackled. But economies are cyclical and do bounce back, even after the extreme conditions of a few years ago – and that's what we're starting to experience now.

The markets know this. The stock market is a forward looking indicator. It's likely why stocks have gained over 12% year to date and 20% in the past year.

If the 20% gains of the market over the past year were for a full calendar year, it would be the 22nd best performance in the past 84 years. The good news is 20% gains in the market has been a good indication of future economic growth. Let's take a look at the five markets closest to the past year's performance.

- In 1967, the stock market rose 20.02%. The following year, GDP rose by 4.8%.
- In 2009 and 1963, the market climbed 19.67% each year. GDP grew 3.2% in 2010 and 5.2% in 1964.
- In 1999, the market grew by 19.64% resulting in a 2.9% increase in GDP.
- And in 1996, when the market rose by 19.33%, GDP was higher by 4.4% just 12 months later.

After so many years of suffering, it may be difficult to picture brighter days ahead, but rest assured, they're coming. That's not me being my usual cheerful self. That's the numbers and executives of some of America's top companies talking.

After a near death experience, the patient is about to go back to work. Before you know it, he'll be back at the gym and on the golf course. Let's stop treating him as an invalid and start recognizing that things will return to normal.

[20120829-12](#) 15:02 Pam Re: "The Recovery Is Beginning" (reply to Dennis, above)

I love this! A ray of hope.

[20120829-16](#) 15:52 Ben Today's Lunch at Apple

Lunch — Wednesday, August 29, 2012

Bistro

Seared halibut (\$7): Local Texas Gulf halibut. Served with mushroom risotto, roasted beets, and citrus cream sauce. Contains vegan butter, extra-virgin olive oil, Portobello, black fungus, shiitake, oyster, bunapi, beech, and maitake mushrooms, shallots, garlic, lemon zest and juice, cream, and butter.

Mushroom risotto (\$7): Served with roasted beets, citrus cream, and sautéed spinach and arugula. Contains garlic, shallots, mushroom stock, and Portobello, black fungus, shiitake, oyster, bunapi, beech, and maitake mushrooms.

Grilled chicken Caesar salad (\$7): Garnished with tomatoes, olives, and croutons. Contains garlic, anchovies, capers, Dijon mustard, lemon, parmesan, canola oil, flour, and wheat.

Far East

Chicken dilruba (\$7): Chicken breast simmered in punjabi curry sauce with roasted cauliflower, Serrano riata, naan bread, and choice of white or brown basmati rice. Contains stewed mustard greens, eggplant, walnuts, almonds, yoghurt, Indian spices, gram flour, dry mango powder, garlic, ginger, onions, and lime juice.

Makki paneer pakora (\$7): Grated and cubed paneer cheese simmered in corn curry sauce with roasted cauliflower, Serrano riata, naan bread, and choice of white or brown basmati rice. Contains stewed mustard greens, paneer cheese, cream, Greek non-fat yoghurt, Indian spices, gram flour, dry mango powder, garlic, ginger, onions, and lime juice.

Coconut lassi (\$2): Yogurt based drink with coconut milk, lime, and cardamom.

South of the Border

Grilled chicken "al pastor" tortas (\$6.50): Mexican sandwich served with marinated grilled chicken, refried beans, drunken grilled pineapple, Cotija cheese crema, lettuce, tomatoes, cilantro, and Chihuahua cheese. Contains guajillo chilies, orange, lime, and lemon juices, onions, garlic, chipotle peppers, tequila, spices, cilantro, and beer.

Today's fillings

Tofu fajitas: Fried tofu, bell peppers, and onions.

Marinated grilled chicken thigh: Paprika, garlic, onions, cayenne, chile powder, lime juice, canola oil, salt, and pepper.

Beef picadillo: Pickled jalapeños, carrots, onions, tomatoes, and beer.

Al Forno

Chicken Caesar salad pizza (\$6.50): With anchovies, grilled romaine lettuce, pecorino cheese, olive oil, mozzarella cheese, and Caesar dressing. Contains anchovies and egg.

Pasta

Bucatini with chicken meatballs and marinara (\$7): Contains carrots, celery, onions, garlic, tomatoes, and red wine.

Tofu parmesan (\$7): With grilled eggplant and bucatini with marinara. Contains carrots, celery, onions, garlic, red wine, tomatoes, and breadcrumbs.

Salad

Broccoli salad (\$2): With shallots, sunflower seeds, cranberries, salt, pepper, house-made mayonnaise, and honey.

Fruit salad (\$2): With honeydew, pineapples, strawberries, blueberries, cilantro, orange juice, champagne vinegar, salt, and Serrano peppers.

Pasta salad (\$2): With Asiago cheese, sour cream, house-made mayonnaise, olive oil, parsley, shallots, garlic, sun-dried tomatoes, Kalamata olives, and spinach.

Soup

Thai hot and sour coconut chicken (large \$3.50, small \$2): With tamarind, chile powder, coconut milk, mushrooms, brown sugar, fish sauce, chicken stock, chicken thigh, ginger, kaffir leaf, lemongrass, and lime juice.

Roasted carrot fennel (large \$3.50 small \$2): With onions, sugar, vegetables stock, roasted carrots, and roasted fennel.

Dessert

Chocolate chip cookie (\$1): With butter, brown sugar, sugar, salt, flour, eggs, vanilla extract, baking powder, baking soda, and chocolate chips.

Snickerdoodle (\$1): With butter, eggs, light brown sugar, flour, salt, cinnamon, baking soda, baking powder, and vanilla extract.

Crispy chewy pecan and oats (\$1.25): With butter, sugar, flour, rolled oats, pecans, eggs, marshmallows, baking soda, baking powder, vanilla extract, and salt.

Chai chocolate cake (\$2.50): Made with chai, molasses cake, chai and gianduja chocolate ganache, espresso buttercream, and Italian meringue.

Flourless English breakfast tea cake (\$3): Flourless vanilla sponge cake layered with English breakfast tea infused buttercream, Valrhona Caramelia chocolate, and tea ganache with tempered pistachio dark chocolate.

Peach maple hand pie (\$3.50): White peaches poached in lemon syrup, almond crème, Blis maple syrup, toasted pecans in a hand made puff pastry.

Cookies ricotta cheesecake (\$3): Chocolate cookie crumbs and cream on almond crust.

Rose white chocolate panna cotta (\$1.50): With yogurt-vanilla jelly. Contains gelatin.

Caramelized poached plum tart (\$3): Plums poached in a gin, thyme, and vanilla syrup, then caramelized with brown sugar, vanilla bean, and thyme custard, and in a sugar tart shell.

Chocolate devil's food pudding cake (\$3): Goopy devil's food cake folded with Valrhona 35% milk chocolate, fresh brewed coffee, chocolate crème anglaise, and shaved bitter chocolate.

Ultimate vanilla pudding cake (\$2.50): House-made yellow vanilla cake, creamy vanilla bean pudding center, and fresh strawberries.

Well, the menu said "Halibut" and I was looking forward to it. One of the easiest of fishes to overcook, the Apple Cafeteria gets it right. Tray in hand, I got in line, only to discover that the halibut hadn't shipped; we got mahi mahi instead. A lesser fish, perhaps, but in no way disappointing. My generous filet was over an inch thick, succulent and moist, just short of juicy, barely opaque, and completely wonderful and fork-flakable and all that stuff you want a great piece of fish to be. Complementing this yummy morsel was a pair of pairs of thick beet slices: 2 red, 2 golden... a beautiful, savory mushroom risoto... a generous blob of lightly sauteed spinach... and a twist of exotic mushrooms as a garnish. Delicious!



Seared Mahi Mahi, 'room risoto, beets, spinach



Faith's Caramelized Poached Plum Tart



[This story is completely crazy, but it illustrates, I think, how much goes on in the world that we don't know about. Was this destined for Iran? Mexico? –SteveB]

"Bolivian Police Confiscate \$50 Million of Uranium in La Paz" translated by BoliviaBella

Aug. 28, 2012, (<http://www.boliviabella.com/bolivian-police-confiscate-50-million-of-uranium-in-la-paz.html>)

(LA PAZ) An elite police unit carried out an operation at a private home in downtown La Paz, confiscating 2 tons of uranium. As a result, four Bolivian citizens have been detained. The uranium is valued at approximately \$50 million dollars, according to preliminary information provided by the police. Bolivia appears to have been a "transit" country for the uranium, the destination of which was allegedly the Republic of China. The home is located on Campos Street, near the corner of Arce Avenue.

Additionally, what causes some consternation is that the arrested citizens used the written media to publicize the product. Uranium is a health hazard for neighbors in the area. Laboratory personnel are carrying out the respective analyses. Police and investigators will work to find out to what degree the four citizens were involved. The Viceminister of the Interior, Jorge Pérez, indicated that uranium is highly radioactive and clarified that Bolivia does not produce uranium.

Source: Eju.tv, Aug. 28, 2012, Read Original Article in Spanish: <http://eju.tv/?p=229381>.

Festival Internacional de Cine Verde en Bolivia. Septiembre a Noviembre 2012

Promo Video:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xNEfcEvCslI&feature=share&list=UURRERgwmG2jAcGwYWQ0-vxw>.

20120829-27 20:44 SteveM Fw: Why Mitt R0mney Is Unlikable!
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[Source of original email unknown. –SteveB]

Why Mitt R0mney is Unlikable!

A lot is being said in the media about Mitt Romney not being "likable" or that he doesn't "relate well" to people. Frankly, we struggled to understand why. So after much research, we have come up with a Top Ten List to explain this "unlikability."

Top Ten Reasons to Dislike Mitt R0mney:

1. Drop-dead, collar-ad handsome with gracious, statesmanlike aura. Looks like every central casting's #1 choice for Commander-in-Chief.
2. Been married to ONE woman his entire life, and has been faithful to her, including through her bouts with breast cancer and MS.
3. No scandals or skeletons in his closet. (How boring is that?)
4. Can't speak in a fake, southern, "black preacher voice" when necessary.
5. Highly intelligent. Graduated cum laude from both Harvard Law School and Harvard Business School...and by the way, his academic records are NOT sealed.
6. Doesn't smoke or drink alcohol, and has never done drugs, not even in the counter-culture age when he went to college. Too square for today's America?
7. Represents an America of "yesterday", where people believed in God, went to Church, didn't screw around, worked hard, and became a SUCCESS!
8. Has a family of five great sons....and none of them have police records or are in drug rehab. But of course, they were raised by a stay-at-home mom, and that "choice" deserves America's scorn.
9. Oh yes.....he's a MORMON. We need to be very afraid of that very strange religion that teaches its members to be clean-living, patriotic, fiscally conservative, charitable, self-reliant, and honest.
10. And one more point.....pundits say because of his wealth, he can't relate to ordinary Americans. I guess that's because he made that money HIMSELF.....as opposed to marrying it or inheriting it from Dad.

Apparently, he didn't understand that actually working at a job and earning your own money made you unrelatable to Americans. My goodness, it's a strange world, isn't it?

Personal Information:

His full Name is: Willard Mitt R0mney.

He was Born: March 12, 1947 and is 65 years old.

His Father: George W. Romney, former Governor of the State of Michigan

He was raised in Bloomfield Hills , Michigan

He is Married to Ann R0mney since 1969; they have five children.

Education: B. A. from Brigham Young University, J. D. and M.B.A. from Harvard University

Religion: Mormon - The Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter-Day Saints

Working Background:

After high school, he spent 30 months in France as a Mormon missionary. After going to both Harvard Business School and Harvard Law School simultaneously, he passed the Michigan bar exam, but never worked as an attorney. In 1984, he co-founded Bain Capital a private equity investment firm, one of the largest such firms in the United States.

In 1994, he ran for Senator of Massachusetts and lost to Ted Kennedy.

He was President and CEO of the 2002 Winter Olympic Games.

In 2002, he was elected Governor of the State of Massachusetts where he eliminated a 1.5 billion deficit.

Some Interesting Facts about Romney:

Bain Capital, starting with one small office supply store in Massachusetts, turned it into Staples; now over 2,000 stores employing 90,000 people. Bain Capital also worked to perform the same kinds of business miracles again and again, with companies like Domino's, Sealy, Brookstone, Weather Channel, Burger King, Warner Music Group, Dollarama, Home Depot Supply and many others.

He was an unpaid volunteer campaign worker for his dad's gubernatorial campaign 1 year.

He was an unpaid intern in his dad's governor's office for eight years.

He was an unpaid bishop and state president of his church for ten years.

He was an unpaid President of the Salt Lake Olympic Committee for three years.

He took no salary and was the unpaid Governor of Massachusetts for four years. He gave his entire inheritance from his father to charity.

Mitt Romney is one of the wealthiest self-made men in our country but has given more back to its citizens in terms of money, service and time than most men.

And in 2011 Mitt Romney gave over \$4 million to charity, almost 19% of his income....

Just for comparison purposes, Obama gave 1% and Joe Biden gave \$300 or .0013%. Mitt Romney is Trustworthy:

He will show us his high school and college transcripts.

He will show us his social security card.

He will show us his law degree.

He will show us his draft notice.

He will show us his medical records.

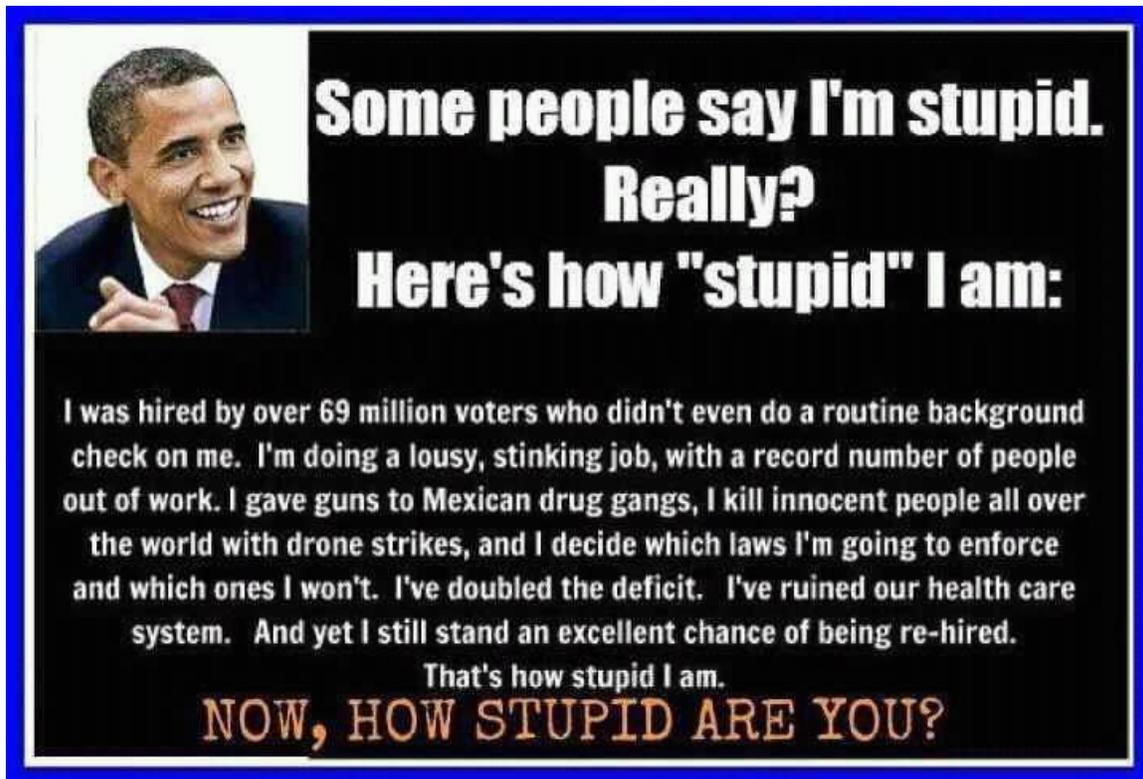
Mitt Romney's background, experience and trustworthiness show him to be a great leader and an excellent citizen for President of the United States. You may think that Romney may not be the best representative the Republicans

could have selected. At least I know what religion he is, and that he won't desecrate the flag, bow down to foreign powers, or practice fiscal irresponsibility.

I know he has the ability to turn around this financial debacle that the current regime has gotten us into. We won't like all the things necessary to recover from this debt, but someone with Romney's background can do it.

But, on the minus side, he never was a "Community Organizer", never took drugs or smoked pot, never got drunk, did not associate with communists or terrorists, nor did he attend a church whose pastor called for God to damn the US.

[20120829-28](#) 20:45 SteveM Graphic: Here's How Stupid Obama Is!



[20120829-29](#) 20:51 SteveB Re: Here's How Stupid Obama Is! (reply to SteveM, above)

Apparently not stupid enough to believe these lies!

[20120829-30](#) 21:05 SteveM Re: Here's How Stupid Obama Is! (reply to SteveB, above)

Ah, don't put yourself down, SteveB, you certainly ARE stupid enough!!

BTW, there have been 2000 US deaths in Afghanistan, half of them in the past 27 months. Who's your Prez? You are stupid enough to believe if the lame stream media doesn't report this fact, this way, it doesn't exist and BHO is blameless, but had it been a Bush. you'd be stupid enough to show you NONE middle, partisan slant. No damn wonder little gets done in Wastington with friends of the middle like you!

And you, a Republican, think an American President should just (what?) walk away from Bush's war?

It wasn't enough for you that Obama ended Bush's disastrous war in Iraq?

Getting out of Bush's other mess is harder. Do you have any suggestions that wouldn't be harmful to American interests? R0mney doesn't seem to, and Ryan has no idea where Af-who-sistan might be.



Where Paul Ryan wants to return the middle class and the poor: ANCIENT TIMES in the Wisconsin Dells, blessed with a "selfish" evangelical administration? No, thanks!

<http://www.epodunk.com/cgi-bin/genInfo.php?locIndex=24634>



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

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

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

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FRIENDS OF THE MIDDLE NEWSLETTER #216 — AUG. 31, 2012

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

INDEX: Click here.

Greed!

(posted by Dennis, Aug. 31, 2012)

Who would have thought of Mitt Romney as an agent of revolutionary change?

"Greed and Debt: The True Story of Mitt Romney and Bain Capital" by Matt Taibbi, *Rolling Stone*

Aug. 29, 2012, (<http://www.rollingstone.com/politics/news/greed-and-debt-the-true-story-of-mitt-romney-and-bain-capital-20120829>)



(How the GOP presidential candidate and his private equity firm staged an epic wealth grab, destroyed jobs – and stuck others with the bill.)

The great criticism of Mitt Romney, from both sides of the aisle, has always been that he doesn't stand for anything. He's a flip-flopper, they say, a lightweight, a cardboard opportunist who'll say anything to get elected.

The critics couldn't be more wrong. Mitt Romney is no tissue-paper man. He's closer to being a revolutionary, a backward-world version of Che or Trotsky, with tweezed nostrils instead of a beard, a half-Windsor instead of a leather jerkin. His legendary flip-flops aren't the lies of a bumbling opportunist – they're the confident prevarications of a man untroubled by misleading the nonbeliever in pursuit of a single, all-consuming goal. Romney has a vision, and he's trying for something big: We've just been too slow to sort out what it is, just as we've been slow to grasp the roots of the radical economic changes that have swept the country in the last generation.

The incredible untold story of the 2012 election so far is that Romney's run has been a shimmering pearl of perfect political hypocrisy, which he's somehow managed to keep hidden, even with thousands of cameras following his every move. And the drama of this rhetorical high-wire act was ratcheted up even further when Romney chose his running mate, Rep. Paul Ryan of Wisconsin – like himself, a self-righteously anal, thin-lipped, Whitest Kids U Know penny pincher who'd be honored to tell *Oliver Twist* there's no more soup left. By selecting Ryan, Romney, the hard-charging, chameleonic champion of a disgraced-yet-defiant Wall Street, officially succeeded in moving the battle lines in the 2012 presidential race.

Like John McCain four years before, Romney desperately needed a vice-presidential pick that would change the game. But where McCain bet on a combustive mix of clueless novelty and suburban sexual tension named Sarah Palin, Romney bet on an idea. He said as much when he unveiled his choice of Ryan, the author of a hair-raising budget-cutting plan best known for its willingness to slash the sacred cows of Medicare and Medicaid. "Paul Ryan has become an intellectual leader of the Republican Party," Romney told frenzied Republican supporters in Norfolk, Virginia, standing before the reliably jingoistic backdrop of a floating warship. "He understands the fiscal challenges facing America: our exploding deficits and crushing debt."

Debt, debt, debt. If the Republican Party had a James Carville, this is what he would have said to win Mitt over, in whatever late-night war room session led to the Ryan pick: "It's the debt, stupid." This is the way to defeat Barack Obama: to recast the race as a jeremiad against debt, something just about everybody who's ever gotten a bill in the mail hates on a primal level.

Last May, in a much-touted speech in Iowa, Romney used language that was literally inflammatory to describe America's federal borrowing. "A prairie fire of debt is sweeping across Iowa and our nation," he declared. "Every day we fail to act, that fire gets closer to the homes and children we love." Our collective debt is no ordinary problem: According to Mitt, it's going to *burn our children alive*.

And this is where we get to the hypocrisy at the heart of Mitt Romney. Everyone knows that he is fantastically rich, having scored great success, the legend goes, as a "turnaround specialist," a shrewd financial operator who revived moribund companies as a high-priced consultant for a storied Wall Street private equity firm. But what most voters don't know is the way Mitt Romney *actually* made his fortune: by borrowing vast sums of money that other people were forced to pay back. This is the plain, stark reality that has somehow eluded America's top political journalists for two consecutive presidential campaigns: Mitt Romney is one of the greatest and most irresponsible debt creators of all time. In the past few decades, in fact, Romney has piled more debt onto more unsuspecting companies, written more gigantic checks that other people have to cover, than perhaps all but a handful of people on planet Earth.

By making debt the centerpiece of his campaign, Romney was making a calculated bluff of historic dimensions – placing a massive all-in bet on the rank incompetence of the American press corps. The result has been a brilliant comedy: A man makes a \$250 million fortune loading up companies with debt and then extracting million-dollar fees from those same companies, in exchange for the generous service of telling them who needs to be fired in order to finance the debt payments he saddled them with in the first place. That same man then runs for president riding an image of children roasting on flames of debt, choosing as his running mate perhaps the only politician in America more pompous and self-righteous on the subject of the evils of borrowed money than the candidate himself. If Romney pulls off this whopper, you'll have to tip your hat to him: No one in history has ever successfully run for president riding this big of a lie. It's almost enough to make you think he really is qualified for the White House.

The unlikeliness of Romney's gambit isn't simply a reflection of his own artlessly unapologetic mindset – it stands as an emblem for the resiliency of the entire sociopathic Wall Street set he represents. Four years ago, the Mitt Romneys of the world nearly destroyed the global economy with their greed, shortsightedness and – most notably – wildly irresponsible use of debt in pursuit of personal profit. The sight was so disgusting that people everywhere were ready to drop an H-bomb on Lower Manhattan and bayonet the survivors. But today that same insane greed ethos, that same belief in the lunatic pursuit of instant borrowed millions – it's dusted itself off, it's had a shave and a shoeshine, and it's back out there running for president.

Mitt Romney, it turns out, is the perfect frontman for Wall Street's greed revolution. He's not a two-bit, shifty-eyed huckster like Lloyd Blankfein. He's not a sighing, eye-rolling, arrogant jerkwad like Jamie Dimon. But Mitt believes the same things those guys believe: He's been right with them on the front lines of the financialization revolution, a decades-long campaign in which the old, simple, let's-make-stuff-and-sell-it manufacturing economy was replaced with a new, highly complex, let's-take-stuff-and-trash-it financial economy. Instead of cars and airplanes, we built swaps, CDOs and other toxic financial products. Instead of building new companies from the ground up, we took out massive bank loans and used them to acquire existing firms, liquidating every asset in sight and leaving the target companies holding the note. The new borrow-and-conquer economy was morally sanctified by an almost religious faith in the grossly euphemistic concept of "creative destruction," and amounted to a total abdication of collective responsibility by America's rich, whose new thing was making a*loads of money in ever-shorter campaigns of economic conquest, sending the proceeds offshore, and shrugging as the great towns and factories their parents and grandparents built were shuttered and boarded up, crushed by a true prairie fire of debt.

Mitt Romney – a man whose own father built cars and nurtured communities, and was one of the old-school industrial anachronisms pushed aside by the new generation's wealth grab – has emerged now to sell this make-nothing, take-everything, screw-everyone ethos to the world. He's Gordon Gekko, but a new and improved version, with better PR – and a bigger goal. A takeover artist all his life, Romney is now trying to take over America itself. And if his own history is any guide, we'll all end up paying for the acquisition.

Willard "Mitt" Romney's background in many ways suggests a man who was born to be president – disgustingly rich from birth, raised in prep schools, no early exposure to minorities outside of maids, a powerful daddy to clean up his missteps, and timely exemptions from military service. In Romney's bio there are some eerie early-life similarities to other recent presidential figures. (Is America really ready for another Republican president who was a prep-school cheerleader?) And like other great presidential double-talkers such as Bill Clinton and George W. Bush, Romney has shown particular aptitude in the area of telling multiple factual versions of his own life story.

"I longed in many respects to actually be in Vietnam and be representing our country there," he claimed years after the war. To a different audience, he said, "I was not planning on signing up for the military. It was not my desire to go off and serve in Vietnam."

Like John F. Kennedy and George W. Bush, men whose way into power was smoothed by celebrity fathers but who rebelled against their parental legacy as mature politicians, Mitt Romney's career has been both a tribute to and a repudiation of his famous father. George Romney in the 1950s became CEO of American Motors Corp., made a modest fortune betting on energy efficiency in an age of gas guzzlers and ended up serving as governor of the state of Michigan only two generations removed from the Romney clan's tradition of polygamy. For Mitt, who grew up worshipping his tall, craggily handsome, politically moderate father, life was less rocky: Cranbrook prep school in suburban Detroit, followed by Stanford in the Sixties, a missionary term in which he spent two and a half years trying (as he said) to persuade the French to "give up your wine," and Harvard Business School in the Seventies. Then, faced with making a career choice, Mitt chose an odd one: Already married and a father of two, he left Harvard and eschewed both politics and the law to enter the at-the-time unsexy world of financial consulting.

"When you get out of a place like Harvard, you can do anything – at least in the old days you could," says a prominent corporate lawyer on Wall Street who is familiar with Romney's career. "But he comes out, he not only has a Harvard Business School degree, he's got a national pedigree with his name. He could have done anything – but what does he do? He says, 'I'm going to spend my life loading up distressed companies with debt.'"

Romney started off at the Boston Consulting Group, where he showed an aptitude for crunching numbers and glad-handing clients. Then, in 1977, he joined a young entrepreneur named Bill Bain at a firm called Bain & Company, where he worked for six years before being handed the reins of a new firm-within-a-firm called Bain Capital.

In Romney's version of the tale, Bain Capital – which evolved into what is today known as a private equity firm – specialized in turning around moribund companies (Romney even wrote a book called *Turnaround* that complements his other nauseatingly self-complimentary book, *No Apology*) and helped create the Staples office-supply chain. On the campaign trail, Romney relentlessly trades on his own self-perpetuated reputation as a kind of altruistic rescuer of failing enterprises, never missing an opportunity to use the word "help" or "helped" in his description of what he and Bain did for companies. He might, for instance, describe himself as having been "deeply involved in helping other businesses" or say he "helped create tens of thousands of jobs."

The reality is that toward the middle of his career at Bain, Romney made a fateful strategic decision: He moved away from creating companies like Staples through venture capital schemes, and toward a business model that involved borrowing huge sums of money to take over existing firms, then extracting value from them by force. He decided, as he later put it, that "there's a lot greater risk in a startup than there is in acquiring an existing company." In the Eighties, when Romney made this move, this form of financial piracy became known as a leveraged buyout, and it achieved iconic status thanks to Gordon Gekko in *Wall Street*. Gekko's business strategy was essentially identical to the Romney–Bain model, only Gekko called himself a "liberator" of companies instead of a "helper."

Here's how Romney would go about "liberating" a company: A private equity firm like Bain typically seeks out floundering businesses with good cash flows. It then puts down a relatively small amount of its own money and runs to a big bank like Goldman Sachs or Citigroup for the rest of the financing. (Most leveraged buyouts are financed with 60 to 90 percent borrowed cash.) The takeover firm then uses that borrowed money to buy a controlling stake in the target company, either with or without its consent. When an LBO is done without the consent of the target, it's called a hostile takeover; such thrilling acts of corporate piracy were made legend in the Eighties, most notably the 1988 attack by notorious corporate raiders Kohlberg Kravis Roberts against RJR Nabisco, a deal memorialized in the book *Barbarians at the Gate*.

Romney and Bain avoided the hostile approach, preferring to secure the cooperation of their takeover targets by buying off a company's management with lucrative bonuses. Once management is on board, the rest is just math. So if the target company is worth \$500 million, Bain might put down \$20 million of its own cash, then borrow \$350 million from an investment bank to take over a controlling stake.

But here's the catch. When Bain borrows all of that money from the bank, it's the target company that ends up on the hook for all of the debt.

Now your troubled firm – let's say you make tricycles in Alabama – has been taken over by a bunch of slick Wall Street dudes who kicked in as little as five percent as a down payment. So in addition to whatever problems you had before, Tricycle Inc. now owes Goldman or Citigroup \$350 million. With all that new debt service to pay, the company's bottom line is suddenly untenable: You almost have to start firing people immediately just to get your costs down to a manageable level.

"That interest," says Lynn Turner, former chief accountant of the Securities and Exchange Commission, "just sucks the profit out of the company."

Fortunately, the geniuses at Bain who now run the place are there to help tell you whom to fire. And for the service it performs cutting your company's costs to help you pay off the massive debt that it, Bain, saddled your company with in the first place, Bain naturally charges a management fee, typically millions of dollars a year. So Tricycle Inc. now has two gigantic new burdens it never had before Bain Capital stepped into the picture: tens of millions in annual debt service, and millions more in "management fees." Since the initial acquisition of Tricycle Inc. was probably greased by promising the company's upper management lucrative bonuses, all that pain inevitably comes out of just one place: the benefits and payroll of the hourly workforce.

Once all that debt is added, one of two things can happen. The company can fire workers and slash benefits to pay off all its new obligations to Goldman Sachs and Bain, leaving it ripe to be resold by Bain at a huge profit. Or it can go bankrupt – this happens after about seven percent of all private equity buyouts – leaving behind one or more shuttered factory towns. Either way, Bain wins. By power-sucking cash value from even the most rapidly dying firms, private equity raiders like Bain almost always get their cash out before a target goes belly up.

This business model wasn't really "helping," of course – and it wasn't new. Fans of mob movies will recognize what's known as the "bust-out," in which a gangster takes over a restaurant or sporting goods store and then monetizes his investment by running up giant debts on the company's credit line. (Think Paulie buying all those cases of Cutty Sark in *Goodfellas*.) When the note comes due, the mobster simply torches the restaurant and collects the insurance money. Reduced to their most basic level, the leveraged buyouts engineered by Romney followed exactly the same business model. "It's the bust-out," one Wall Street trader says with a laugh. "That's all it is."

Private equity firms aren't necessarily evil by definition. There are many stories of successful turnarounds fueled by private equity, often involving multiple floundering businesses that are rolled into a single entity, eliminating duplicative overhead. Experian, the giant credit-rating tyrant, was acquired by Bain in the Nineties and went on to become an industry leader.

But there's a key difference between private equity firms and the businesses that were America's original industrial cornerstones, like the elder Romney's AMC. Everyone had a stake in the success of those old businesses, which spread prosperity by putting people to work. But even private equity's most enthusiastic adherents have difficulty explaining its benefit to society. Marc Wolpov, a former Bain colleague of Romney's, told reporters during Mitt's first Senate run that Romney erred in trying to sell his business as good for everyone. "I believed he was making a mistake by framing himself as a job creator," said Wolpov. "That was not his or Bain's or the industry's primary objective. The objective of the LBO business is maximizing returns for investors." When it comes to private equity, American workers – not to mention their families and communities – simply don't enter into the equation.

Take a typical Bain transaction involving an Indiana-based company called American Pad and Paper. Bain bought Ampad in 1992 for just \$5 million, financing the rest of the deal with borrowed cash. Within three years, Ampad was paying \$60 million in annual debt payments, plus an additional \$7 million in management fees. A year later, Bain led Ampad to go public, cashed out about \$50 million in stock for itself and its investors, charged the firm \$2 million for arranging the IPO and pocketed another \$5 million in "management" fees. Ampad wound up going bankrupt, and hundreds of workers lost their jobs, but Bain and Romney weren't crying: They'd made more than \$100 million on a \$5 million investment.

To recap: Romney, who has compared the devilish federal debt to a "nightmare" home mortgage that is "adjustable, no-money down and assigned to our children," took over Ampad with essentially no money down, saddled the firm with a nightmare debt and assigned the crushing interest payments not to Bain but to the children of Ampad's workers, who would be left holding the note long after Romney fled the scene. The mortgage analogy is so obvious, in fact, that even Romney himself has made it. He once described Bain's debt-fueled strategy as "using the equivalent of a mortgage to leverage up our investment."

Romney has always kept his distance from the real-life consequences of his profiteering. At one point during Bain's looting of Ampad, a worker named Randy Johnson sent a handwritten letter to Romney, asking him to intervene to save an Ampad factory in Marion, Indiana. In a sterling demonstration of manliness and willingness to face a difficult conversation, Romney, who had just lost his race for the Senate in Massachusetts, wrote Johnson that he was "sorry," but his lawyers had advised him not to get involved. (So much for the candidate who insists that his way is always to "fight to save every job.")

This is typical Romney, who consistently adopts a public posture of having been above the fray, with no blood on his hands from any of the deals he personally engineered. "I never actually ran one of our investments," he says in *Turnaround*. "That was left to management."

In reality, though, Romney was unquestionably the decider at Bain. "I insisted on having almost dictatorial powers," he bragged years after the Ampad deal. Over the years, colleagues would anonymously whisper stories about Mitt

the Boss to the press, describing him as cunning, manipulative and a little bit nuts, with "an ability to identify people's insecurities and exploit them for his own benefit." One former Bain employee said that Romney would screw around with bonuses in small amounts, just to mess with people: He would give \$3 million to one, \$3.1 million to another and \$2.9 million to a third, just to keep those below him on edge.

The private equity business in the early Nineties was dominated by a handful of takeover firms, from the spooky and politically connected Carlyle Group (a favorite subject of conspiracy-theory lit, with its connections to right-wingers like Donald Rumsfeld and George H.W. Bush) to the equally spooky Democrat-leaning assholes at the Blackstone Group. But even among such a colorful cast of characters, Bain had a reputation on Wall Street for secrecy and extreme weirdness – "the KGB of consulting." Its employees, known for their Mormonish uniform of white shirts and red power ties, were dubbed "Bainies" by other Wall Streeters, a rip on the fanatical "Moonies." The firm earned the name thanks to its idiotically adolescent *Spy Kids* culture, in which these glorified slumlords used code names, didn't carry business cards and even sang "company songs" to boost morale.

The seemingly religious flavor of Bain's culture smacks of the generally cultish ethos on Wall Street, in which all sorts of ethically questionable behaviors are justified as being necessary in service of the church of making money. Romney belongs to a true-believer subset within that cult, with a revolutionary's faith in the wisdom of the pure free market, in which destroying companies and sucking the value out of them for personal gain is part of the greater good, and governments should "stand aside and allow the creative destruction inherent in the free economy."

That cultlike zeal helps explain why Romney takes such a curiously unapologetic approach to his own flip-flopping. His infamous changes of stance are not little wispy ideological alterations of a few degrees here or there – they are perfect and absolute mathematical reversals, as in "I believe that abortion should be safe and legal in this country" and "I am firmly pro-life." Yet unlike other politicians, who at least recognize that saying completely contradictory things presents a political problem, Romney seems genuinely puzzled by the public's insistence that he be consistent. "I'm not going to apologize for having changed my mind," he likes to say. It's an attitude that recalls the standard defense offered by Wall Street in the wake of some of its most recent and notorious crimes: Goldman Sachs excused its lying to clients, for example, by insisting that its customers are "sophisticated investors" who should expect to be lied to. "Last time I checked," former Morgan Stanley CEO John Mack sneered after the same scandal, "we were in business to be profitable."

Within the cult of Wall Street that forged Mitt Romney, making money justifies any behavior, no matter how venal. The look on Romney's face when he refuses to apologize says it all: *Hey, I'm trying to win an election. We're all grown-ups here.* After the Ampad deal, Romney expressed contempt for critics who lived in "fantasy land." "This is the real world," he said, "and in the real world there is nothing wrong with companies trying to compete, trying to stay alive, trying to make money."

In the old days, making money required sharing the wealth: with assembly-line workers, with middle management, with schools and communities, with investors. Even the Gilded Age robber barons, despite their unapologetic efforts to keep workers from getting any rights at all, built America in spite of themselves, erecting railroads and oil wells and telegraph wires. And from the time the monopolists were reined in with antitrust laws through the days when men like Mitt Romney's dad exited center stage in our economy, the American social contract was pretty consistent: The rich got to stay rich, often filthy rich, but they paid taxes and a living wage and everyone else rose at least a little bit along with them.

But under Romney's business model, leveraging other people's debt means you can carve out big profits for yourself and leave everyone else holding the bag. Despite what Romney claims, the rate of return he provided for Bain's investors over the years wasn't all that great. Romney biographer and *Wall Street Journal* reporter Brett Arends, who analyzed Bain's performance between 1984 and 1998, concludes that the firm's returns were likely less than 30 percent per year, which happened to track more or less with the stock market's average during that time. "That's how much money you could have made by issuing company bonds and then spending the money picking stocks out of the paper at random," Arends observes. So for all the destruction Romney wreaked on Middle America in the name of "trying to make money," investors could have just plunked their money into traditional stocks and gotten pretty much the same returns.

The only ones who profited in a big way from all the job-killing debt that Romney leveraged were Mitt and his buddies at Bain, along with Wall Street firms like Goldman and Citigroup. Barry Ritholtz, author of *Bailout Nation*, says the criticisms of Bain about layoffs and meanness miss a more important point, which is that the firm's profit-producing record is absurdly mediocre, especially when set against all the trouble and pain its business model causes. "Bain's fundamental flaw, at least according to the math," Ritholtz writes, "is that they took lots of risk, use immense leverage and charged enormous fees, for performance that was more or less the same as [stock] indexing."

'I'm not a Romney guy, because I'm not a Bain guy,' says Lenny Patnode, in an Irish pub in the factory town of Pittsfield, Massachusetts. "But I'm not an Obama guy, either. Just so you know."

I feel bad even asking Patnode about Romney. Big and burly, with white hair and the thick forearms of a man who's stocked a shelf or two in his lifetime, he seems to belong to an era before things like leveraged debt even existed. For 38 years, Patnode worked for a company called KB Toys in Pittsfield. He was the longest-serving employee in the company's history, opening some of the firm's first mall stores, making some of its canniest product buys ("Tamagotchi pets," he says, beaming, "and Tech-Decks, too"), traveling all over the world to help build an empire that at its peak included 1,300 stores. "There were times when I worked seven days a week, 16 hours a day," he says. "I opened three stores in two months once."

Then in 2000, right before Romney gave up his ownership stake in Bain Capital, the firm targeted KB Toys. The debacle that followed serves as a prime example of the conflict between the old model of American business, built from the ground up with sweat and industry know-how, and the new globalist model, the Romney model, which uses leverage as a weapon of high-speed conquest.

In a typical private-equity fragging, Bain put up a mere \$18 million to acquire KB Toys and got big banks to finance the remaining \$302 million it needed. Less than a year and a half after the purchase, Bain decided to give itself a gift known as a "dividend recapitalization." The firm induced KB Toys to redeem \$121 million in stock and take out more than \$66 million in bank loans – \$83 million of which went directly into the pockets of Bain's owners and investors, including Romney. "The dividend recap is like borrowing someone else's credit card to take out a cash advance, and then leaving them to pay it off," says Heather Slavkin Corzo, who monitors private equity takeovers as the senior legal policy adviser for the AFL-CIO.

Bain ended up earning a return of at least 370 percent on the deal, while KB Toys fell into bankruptcy, saddled with millions in debt. KB's former parent company, Big Lots, alleged in bankruptcy court that Bain's "unjustified" return on the dividend recap was actually "900 percent in a mere 16 months." Patnode, by contrast, was fired in December 2008, after almost four decades on the job. Like other employees, he didn't get a single day's severance.

I ask Slavkin Corzo what Bain's justification was for the giant dividend recapitalization in the KB Toys acquisition. The question throws her, as though she's surprised anyone would ask for a reason a company like Bain would loot a firm like KB Toys. "It wasn't like, 'Yay, we did a good job, we get a dividend,'" she says with a laugh. "It was like, 'We can do this, so we will.'"

At the time of the KB Toys deal, Romney was a Bain investor and owner, making him a mere beneficiary of the raping and pillaging, rather than its direct organizer. Moreover, KB's demise was hastened by a host of genuine market forces, including competition from video games and cellphones. But there's absolutely no way to look at what Bain did at KB and see anything but a cash grab – one that followed the business model laid out by Romney. Rather than cutting costs and tightening belts, Bain added \$300 million in debt to the firm's bottom line while taking out more than \$120 million in cash – an outright looting that creditors later described in a lawsuit as "breaking open the piggy bank." What's more, Bain smoothed the deal in typical fashion by giving huge bonuses to the company's top managers as the firm headed toward bankruptcy. CEO Michael Glazer got an incredible \$18.4 million, while CFO Robert Feldman received \$4.8 million and senior VP Thomas Alfonsi took home \$3.3 million.

And what did Bain bring to the table in return for its massive, outsize payout? KB Toys had built a small empire by targeting middle-class buyers with value-priced products. It succeeded mainly because the firm's leaders had a great instinct for what they were making and selling. These were people who had been in the specialty toy business since 1922; collectively, they had millions of man-hours of knowledge about how the industry works and how toy

customers behave. KB's president in the Eighties, the late Saul Rubenstein, used to carry around a giant computer printout of the company's inventory, and would fall asleep reading it on the weekends, the pages clasped to his chest. "He knew the name and number of all those toys," his widow, Shirley, says proudly. "He loved toys."

Bain's experience in the toy industry, by contrast, was precisely bupkus. They didn't know a damn thing about the business they had taken over – and they never cared to learn. The firm's entire contribution was \$18 million in cash and a huge mound of borrowed money that gave it the power to pull the levers. "The people who came in after – they were never toy people," says Shirley Rubenstein. To make matters worse, former employees say, Bain deluged them with requests for paperwork and reports, forcing them to worry more about the whims of their new bosses than the demands of their customers. "We took our eye off the ball," Patnode says. "And if you take your eye off the ball, you strike out."

In the end, Bain never bothered to come up with a plan for how KB Toys could meet the 21st-century challenges of video games and cellphone gadgets that were the company's ostensible downfall. And that's where Romney's self-touted reputation as a turnaround specialist is a myth. In the Bain model, the actual turnaround isn't necessary. It's just a cover story. It's nice for the private equity firm if it happens, because it makes the acquired company more attractive for resale or an IPO. But it's mostly irrelevant to the success of the takeover model, where huge cash returns are extracted whether the captured firm thrives or not.

"The thing about it is, nobody gets hurt," says Patnode. "Except the people who worked here."

Romney was a prime mover in the radical social and political transformation that was cooked up by Wall Street beginning in the 1980s. In fact, you can trace the whole history of the modern age of financialization just by following the highly specific corner of the economic universe inhabited by the leveraged buyout business, where Mitt Romney thrived. If you look at the number of leveraged buyouts dating back two or three decades, you see a clear pattern: Takeovers rose sharply with each of Wall Street's great easy-money schemes, then plummeted just as sharply after each of those scams crashed and burned, leaving the rest of us with the bill.

In the Eighties, when Romney and Bain were cutting their teeth in the LBO business, the primary magic trick involved the junk bonds pioneered by convicted felon Mike Milken, which allowed firms like Bain to find easy financing for takeovers by using wildly overpriced distressed corporate bonds as collateral. Junk bonds gave the Gordon Gekkos of the world sudden primacy over old-school industrial titans like the Fords and the Rockefellers: For the first time, the ability to make deals became more valuable than the ability to make stuff, and the ability to instantly engineer billions in illusory financing trumped the comparatively slow process of making and selling products for gradual returns.

Romney was right in the middle of this radical change. In fact, according to *The Boston Globe* – whose in-depth reporting on Romney and Bain has spanned three decades – one of Romney's first LBO deals, and one of his most profitable, involved Mike Milken himself. Bain put down \$10 million in cash, got \$300 million in financing from Milken and bought a pair of department-store chains, Bealls Brothers and Palais Royal. In what should by now be a familiar outcome, the two chains – which Bain merged into a single outfit called Stage Stores – filed for bankruptcy protection in 2000 under the weight of more than \$444 million in debt. As always, Bain took no responsibility for the company's demise. (If you search the public record, you will not find a single instance of Mitt Romney taking responsibility for a company's failure.) Instead, Bain blamed Stage's collapse on "operating problems" that took place three years after Bain cashed out, finishing with a \$175 million return on its initial investment of \$10 million.

But here's the interesting twist: Romney made the Bealls-Palais deal just as the federal government was launching charges of massive manipulation and insider trading against Milken and his firm, Drexel Burnham Lambert. After what must have been a lengthy and agonizing period of moral soul-searching, however, Romney decided not to kill the deal, despite its shady financing. "We did not say, 'Oh, my goodness, Drexel has been accused of something, not been found guilty,'" Romney told reporters years after the deal. "Should we basically stop the transaction and blow the whole thing up?"

In an even more incredible disregard for basic morality, Romney forged ahead with the deal even though Milken's case was being heard by a federal district judge named Milton Pollack, whose wife, Moselle, happened to be the chairwoman of none other than Palais Royal. In short, one of Romney's first takeover deals was financed by dirty

money – and one of the corporate chiefs about to receive a big payout from Bain was married to the judge hearing the case. Although the SEC took no formal action, it issued a sharp criticism, complaining that Romney was allowing Milken's money to have a possible influence over "the administration of justice."

After Milken and his junk bond scheme crashed in the late Eighties, Romney and other takeover artists moved on to Wall Street's next get-rich-quick scheme: the tech-Internet stock bubble. By 1997 and 1998, there were nearly \$400 billion in leveraged buyouts a year, as easy money once again gave these financial piracy firms the ammunition they needed to raid companies like KB Toys. Firms like Bain even have a colorful pirate name for the pools of takeover money they raise in advance from pension funds, university endowments and other institutional investors. "They call it dry powder," says Slavkin Corzo, the union adviser.

After the Internet bubble burst and private equity started cashing in on Wall Street's mortgage scam, LBO deals ballooned to almost \$900 billion in 2006. Once again, storied companies with long histories and deep regional ties were descended upon by Bain and other pirates, saddled with hundreds of millions in debt, forced to pay huge management fees and "dividend recapitalizations," and ridden into bankruptcy amid waves of layoffs. Established firms like Del Monte, Hertz and Dollar General were all taken over in a "prairie fire of debt" – one even more destructive than the government borrowing that Romney is flogging on the campaign trail. When Hertz was conquered in 2005 by a trio of private equity firms, including the Carlyle Group, the interest payments on its debt soared by a monstrous 80 percent, forcing the company to eliminate a third of its 32,000 jobs.

In 2010, a year after the last round of Hertz layoffs, Carlyle teamed up with Bain to take \$500 million out of another takeover target: the parent company of Dunkin' Donuts and Baskin-Robbins. Dunkin' had to take out a \$1.25 billion loan to pay a dividend to its new private equity owners. So think of this the next time you go to Dunkin' Donuts for a cup of coffee: A small cup of joe costs about \$1.69 in most outlets, which means that for years to come, Dunkin' Donuts will have to sell about 2,011,834 small coffees every month – about \$3.4 million – just to meet the interest payments on the loan it took out to pay Bain and Carlyle their little one-time dividend. And that doesn't include the principal on the loan, or the additional millions in debt that Dunkin' has to pay every year to get out from under the \$2.4 billion in debt it's now saddled with after having the privilege of being taken over – with borrowed money – by the firm that Romney built.

If you haven't heard much about how takeover deals like Dunkin' and KB Toys work, that's because Mitt Romney and his private equity brethren don't want you to. The new owners of American industry are the polar opposites of the Milton Hersheys and Andrew Carnegies who built this country, commercial titans who longed to leave visible legacies of their accomplishments, erecting hospitals and schools and libraries, sometimes leaving behind thriving towns that bore their names.

The men of the private equity generation want no such thing. "We try to hide religiously," explained Steven Feinberg, the CEO of a takeover firm called Cerberus Capital Management that recently drove one of its targets into bankruptcy after saddling it with \$2.3 billion in debt. "If anyone at Cerberus has his picture in the paper and a picture of his apartment, we will do more than fire that person," Feinberg told shareholders in 2007. "We will kill him. The jail sentence will be worth it."

Which brings us to another aspect of Romney's business career that has largely been hidden from voters: His personal fortune would not have been possible without the direct assistance of the U.S. government. The taxpayer-funded subsidies that Romney has received go well beyond the humdrum, backdoor, welfare-sucking that all supposedly self-made free marketeers inevitably indulge in. Not that Romney hasn't done just fine at milking the government when it suits his purposes, the most obvious instance being the incredible \$1.5 billion in aid he siphoned out of the U.S. Treasury as head of the 2002 Winter Olympics in Salt Lake – a sum greater than all federal spending for the previous seven U.S. Olympic games combined. Romney, the supposed fiscal conservative, blew through an average of \$625,000 in taxpayer money per athlete – an astounding increase of 5,582 percent over the \$11,000 average at the 1984 games in Los Angeles. In 1993, right as he was preparing to run for the Senate, Romney also engineered a government deal worth at least \$10 million for Bain's consulting firm, when it was teetering on the edge of bankruptcy. (See "The Federal Bailout That Saved Romney" (<http://www.rollingstone.com/politics/news/the-federal-bailout-that-saved-mitt-romney-20120829>))

But the way Romney most directly owes his success to the government is through the structure of the tax code. The entire business of leveraged buyouts wouldn't be possible without a provision in the federal code that allows companies like Bain to deduct the interest on the debt they use to acquire and loot their targets. This is the same universally beloved tax deduction you can use to write off your mortgage interest payments, so tampering with it is considered political suicide – it's been called the "third rail of tax reform." So the Romney who routinely rails against the national debt as some kind of child-killing "mortgage" is the same man who spent decades exploiting a tax deduction specifically designed for mortgage holders in order to bilk every dollar he could out of U.S. businesses before burning them to the ground.

Because minus that tax break, Romney's debt-based takeovers would have been unsustainably expensive. Before Lynn Turner became chief accountant of the SEC, where he reviewed filings on takeover deals, he crunched the numbers on leveraged buyouts as an accountant at a Big Four auditing firm. "In the majority of these deals," Turner says, "the tax deduction has a big enough impact on the bottom line that the takeover wouldn't work without it."

Thanks to the tax deduction, in other words, the government actually incentivizes the kind of leverage-based takeovers that Romney built his fortune on. Romney the businessman built his career on two things that Romney the candidate decries: massive debt and dumb federal giveaways. "I don't know what Romney would be doing but for debt and its tax-advantaged position in the tax code," says a prominent Wall Street lawyer, "but he wouldn't be fabulously wealthy."

Adding to the hypocrisy, the money that Romney personally pocketed on Bain's takeover deals was usually taxed not as income, but either as capital gains or as "carried interest," both of which are capped at a maximum rate of 15 percent. In addition, reporters have uncovered plenty of evidence that Romney takes full advantage of offshore tax havens: He has an interest in at least 12 Bain funds, worth a total of \$30 million, that are based in the Cayman Islands; he has reportedly used a squirrely tax shelter known as a "blocker corporation" that cheats taxpayers out of some \$100 million a year; and his wife, Ann, had a Swiss bank account worth \$3 million. As a private equity pirate, Romney pays less than half the tax rate of most American executives – less, even, than teachers, firefighters, cops and nurses. Asked about the fact that he paid a tax rate of only 13.9 percent on income of \$21.7 million in 2010, Romney responded testily that the massive windfall he enjoys from exploiting the tax code is "entirely legal and fair."

Essentially, Romney got rich in a business that couldn't exist without a perverse tax break, and he got to keep double his earnings because of another loophole – a pair of bureaucratic accidents that have not only teamed up to threaten us with a Mitt Romney presidency but that make future Romneys far more likely. "Those two tax rules distort the economics of private equity investments, making them much more lucrative than they should be," says Rebecca Wilkins, senior counsel at the Center for Tax Justice. "So we get more of that activity than the market would support on its own."

Listen to Mitt Romney speak, and see if you can notice what's missing. This is a man who grew up in Michigan, went to college in California, walked door to door through the streets of southern France as a missionary and was a governor of Massachusetts, the home of perhaps the most instantly recognizable, heavily accented English this side of Edinburgh. Yet not a trace of any of these places is detectable in Romney's diction. None of the people in any of those places bled in and left a mark on the man.

Romney is a man from nowhere. In his post-regional attitude, he shares something with his campaign opponent, Barack Obama, whose background is a similarly jumbled pastiche of regionally nonspecific non-identity. But in the way he bounced around the world as a half-orphaned child, Obama was more like an involuntary passenger in the demographic revolution reshaping the planet than one of its leaders.

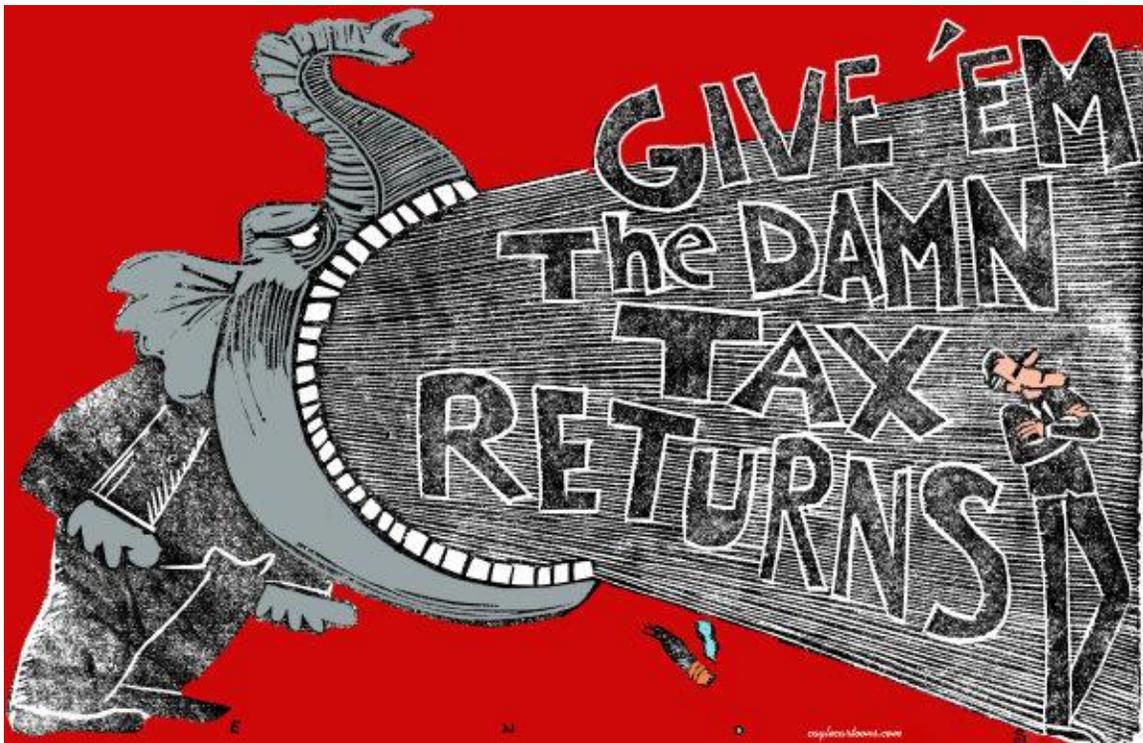
Romney, on the other hand, is a perfect representative of one side of the ominous cultural divide that will define the next generation, not just here in America but all over the world. Forget about the Southern strategy, blue versus red, swing states and swing voters – all of those political clichés are quaint relics of a less threatening era that is now part of our past, or soon will be. The next conflict defining us all is much more unnerving.

That conflict will be between people who live somewhere, and people who live nowhere. It will be between people who consider themselves citizens of actual countries, to which they have patriotic allegiance, and people to whom nations are meaningless, who live in a stateless global archipelago of privilege – a collection of private schools, tax havens and gated residential communities with little or no connection to the outside world.

Mitt Romney isn't blue or red. He's an archipelago man. That's a big reason that voters have been slow to warm up to him. From LBJ to Bill Clinton to George W. Bush to Sarah Palin, Americans like their politicians to sound like they're from somewhere, to be human symbols of our love affair with small towns, the girl next door, the little pink houses of Mellencamp myth. Most of those mythical American towns grew up around factories – think chocolate bars from Hershey, baseball bats from Louisville, cereals from Battle Creek. Deep down, what scares voters in both parties the most is the thought that these unique and vital places are vanishing or eroding – overrun by immigrants or the forces of globalism or both, with giant Walmarts descending like spaceships to replace the corner grocer, the family barber and the local hardware store, and 1,000 cable channels replacing the school dance and the gossip at the local diner.

Obama ran on "change" in 2008, but Mitt Romney represents a far more real and seismic shift in the American landscape. Romney is the frontman and apostle of an economic revolution, in which transactions are manufactured instead of products, wealth is generated without accompanying prosperity, and Cayman Islands partnerships are lovingly erected and nurtured while American communities fall apart. **The entire purpose of the business model that Romney helped pioneer is to move money into the archipelago from the places outside it, using massive amounts of taxpayer-subsidized debt to enrich a handful of billionaires. It's a vision of society that's crazy, vicious and almost unbelievably selfish, yet it's running for president, and it has a chance of winning.** Perhaps that change is coming whether we like it or not. Perhaps Mitt Romney is the best man to manage the transition. But it seems a little early to vote for that kind of wholesale surrender.

(This story is from the September 13, 2012 issue of *Rolling Stone*.)



20120830-03 14:15 Pam Re: Greed! (reply to Dennis, above)

This is incredible. I hope you all read it.

20120830-20 22:34 Bill Re: Greed! (reply to Pam & Dennis, above)

Wonderful article and wonderfully provocative. I don't want to be "helped" or turned around by Mitt in either his Bain avatar or as President. He is a flip-flopper and a chameleon, and for that reason we should beware his proffered stewardship.

What moves me to write is the article's explicit condemnation of interest deductibility and implicit indictment of capitalism, which may be, so to speak, rough trade, but which is wonderfully vigorous and seeks out opportunity where it is visible, for good or ill. I could state it this way: Greed expands to fill the opportunities it perceives, although the word greed, given its heavy load of negative semantics, may not be quite right. Maybe it's best to view Bain & Co. as operating in an amoral ambience, wherein big capital can operate at the bleeding edge of seeking out maximum return, wholly within existing law. After all, no one at Bain went to jail that I'm aware of.

The most troubling aspect about the LBOs that Bain and other firms did—and that left wreckage in terms of vanished jobs and diminished prospects for so many—is the ridiculously top-heavy debt loads that are used in those LBOs that are, in effect, drive-by shootings. The writer justifiably condemns this practice but in the process makes an unqualified condemnation of deducting interest expense. In my knowledge, every G20 country's tax code allows this. Further, expansion of the economy is greatly handicapped if interest expense is not deductible. The problem is when should regulators intervene. What measure, what ratio makes a given amount of debt intractable. The SEC was notably somnolent during the heyday of LBOs.

Some LBOs, as conceded by the author, can be lifesavers for the existence of a company. Many or most of Bain's were not, as the author shouts. Romney definitely needs to take a bath after engineering the highly leveraged deals—in Clorox.

20120830-04 15:24 SteveB Re: Greed! (reply to Dennis, above)

The real truth...

20120830-05 16:08 Clark Re: Greed! (reply to Dennis, above)

Best thing I've ever read on Bain and Co. and Romney's "brilliant" biz career -- devastating. Even has insights into why and how the guy can lie with such a pious, straight face. "Our campaign don't need no freakin' fact-checkers..."

20120830-09 17:10 Colin Re: Greed! (reply to Dennis, above)

Between the Mitt Romney article and the interview of Matt Taibbi by Eliot Spitzer also on the *Rolling Stone* website (see link below) about current administration failing to prosecute Wall Street fraud, it brings one phrase to my mind: "Damn it feels good to be a Bankster!"

<http://www.rollingstone.com/politics/blogs/taibblog/matt-taibbi-eliot-spitzer-discuss-eric-holders-failure-20120822>)

With widespread perception that these are the American Voters' only two choices for President, the Banksters must be sleeping soundly, secure in the knowledge that greed will reign supreme in the U.S. for four more years at least.

20120830-14 18:45 Art Re: Greed! (reply to Dennis, above)

Great article. Somehow, we have to get people to read this.

For those of the Republicans still thinking, the logic is that Romney, for all his faults, understands business and will know how to get the country back on track. For my book, he is not really and never has been a "businessman" in the traditional sense. He is a corporate raider. That "business" has nothing to do with having an idea to produce something, building a factory and producing and selling something. In others words an investment in doing something along with a bunch of other people.

The article is an excellent summary of Bain Capital and its history. I've taken the liberty of pulling a paragraph from the article just below. Question is, will this guy, who we already know is a pathological liar, really do us any good?

Take a typical Bain transaction involving an Indiana-based company called American Pad and Paper. Bain bought Ampad in 1992 for just \$5 million, financing the rest of the deal with borrowed cash. Within three years, Ampad was paying \$60 million in annual debt payments, plus an additional \$7 million in management fees. A year later, Bain led Ampad to go public, cashed out about \$50 million in stock for itself and its investors, charged the firm \$2 million for arranging the IPO and pocketed another \$5 million in "management" fees. Ampad wound up going bankrupt, and hundreds of workers lost their jobs, but Bain and Romney weren't crying: They'd made more than \$100 million on a \$5 million investment.

[20120830-01](#) 11:46 Dennis

Re: "Lying for the Lord" (reply to SteveB, FotM Newsletter #215) & "The Real Science Behind Scientology"

I have a late friend who dated the Sci-fi writer Harlan Ellison. Ellison claims to have been present for the founding of the "Church" of Scientology by fellow Sci-Fi writer L. Ron Hubbard:

"The Real Science Behind Scientology" by Michael Shermer, *Scientific American*

Oct. 20, 2011, (<http://www.scientificamerican.com/article.cfm?id=the-real-science-behind-scientology>)

(It's not what you think.)

In the 1990s I had the opportunity to dine with the late musician Isaac Hayes, whose career fortunes had just made a stunning turnabout upward, which he attributed to Scientology. It was a glowing testimonial by a sincere follower of the Church, but is it evidence that Scientology works? Two recently published books argue that there is no science in Scientology, only quasireligious doctrines wrapped in New Age flapdoodle masquerading as science. The Church of Scientology, by Hugh B. Urban, professor of religious studies at Ohio State University, is the most scholarly treatment of the organization to date, and investigative journalist Janet Reitman's *Inside Scientology* is an electrifying read that includes eye-popping and well-documented tales of billion-year con-tracts, aggressive recruitment programs and abuse of staffers.

The problem with testimonials is that they do not constitute evidence in science. As social psychologist Carol Tavris told me, "Every therapy produces enthusiastic testimonials because of the justification-of-effort effect. Anyone who invests time and money and effort in a therapy will say it helped. Scientology might have helped Isaac Hayes, just as psychoanalysis and bungee jumping might have helped others, but that doesn't mean the intervention was the reason. To know if there is anything special about Scientology, you need to do controlled studies—randomly assigning people to Scientology or a control group (or a different therapy) for the same problem." To my knowledge, no such study has been conducted. The real science behind Scientology seems to be an understanding of the very human need, as social animals, to be part of a supportive group—and the willingness of people to pay handsomely for it.

If Scientology is not a science, is it even a religion? Well, it does have its own creation myth. Around 75 million years ago Xenu, the ruler of a Galactic Confederation of 76 planets, transported billions of his charges in spaceships similar to DC-8 jets to a planet called Teegeeeack (Earth). There they were placed near volcanoes and killed by exploding hydrogen bombs, after which their "thetans" (souls) remained to inhabit the bodies of future earthlings, causing humans today great spiritual harm and unhappiness that can be remedied through special techniques involving an Electropsychometer (E-meter) in a process called auditing.

Thanks to the Internet, this story—previously revealed only to those who paid many thousands of dollars in courses to reach Operating Thetan Level III (OT III) of Scientology—is now so widely known that it was even featured in a 2005 episode of the animated TV series South Park. In fact, according to numerous Web postings by ex-Scientologists, documents from court cases involving followers who reached OT III and abundant books and articles by ex-members who heard the story firsthand and corroborate the details, this is Scientology's Genesis. So did its founder, writer L. Ron Hubbard, just make it all up—as legend has it—to create a religion that was more lucrative than producing science fiction?

Instead of printing the legend as fact, I recently interviewed the acclaimed science-fiction author Harlan Ellison, who told me he was at the birth of Scientology. At a meeting in New York City of a sci-fi writers' group called the Hydra Club, Hubbard was complaining to L. Sprague de Camp and the others about writing for a penny a word. "Lester del Rey then said half-jokingly, 'What you really ought to do is create a religion because it will be tax-free,' and at that point everyone in the room started chiming in with ideas for this new religion. So the idea was a Gestalt that Ron caught on to and assimilated the details. He then wrote it up as 'Dianetics: A New Science of the Mind' and sold it to John W. Campbell, Jr., who published it in Astounding Science Fiction in 1950."

To be fair, Scientology's Xenu story is no more scientifically untenable than other faiths' origin myths. If there is no testable means of determining which creation cosmogony is correct, perhaps they are all astounding science fictions.

[20120830-02](#) 13:40 Pam Re: "Lying for the Lord" (reply to Dennis, above)

I always find it interesting to note how believers in bogus ideologies are the most defensive when it comes to presenting their case. Real scientists don't pound the table or demand total obedience. People like Tom Cruise are not looking for god or an ethos; they're immersing themselves in a fairy tale that for some screwy reason they prefer to reality. The really horrible thing about any religion is when it claims to be the sole source of truth. Scientists know they're only right until the next person comes along and proves them wrong. Science is a journey; religion is a petrified forest, and Scientology is a joke.

[20120830-18](#) 20:38 Bill Re: "Lying for the Lord" (reply to Pam, above)

What marvelous reflection you have made. What I would add is that those religions that allow divinity and preserve an ability to marvel at existence may be a wholly positive presence among adherents and the rest of the world. These are the religions that--without self-righteousness or claim to be the sole source of truth—ease the myriad difficulties of living and getting along with the rest of humanity.

[20120830-13](#) 18:33 Art Re: "Lying for the Lord" (reply to Pam & Dennis, above)

Think this says something about people.

[20120830-06](#) 16:22 SteveM Video: "Actor Compares Obama to Hugo Chavez"

Video: "Actor Compares Obama to Hugo Chavez" by Daniel Noe, ImpeachObamaCampaign.com

Aug. 30, 2012, (<http://www.impeachobamacampaign.com/video-actor-compares-obama-to-hugo-chavez/>)

Actor Jon Voight says that Obama has taken over the media 'in no less a way' than Hugo Chavez has in Venezuela (these specific comments occur around the 4:30 mark). He also talks about his support for Mitt Romney for president.

20120830-07

16:43

SteveB

"Fox News' Sally Kohn: Paul Ryan's RNC Speech 'Was Attempt to Set World Record for Blatant Lies'"

"Fox News' Sally Kohn: Paul Ryan's RNC Speech 'Was Attempt to Set World Record for Blatant Lies'" by Bonnie Kavoussi, Huffington Post

Aug. 30, 2012, (http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/08/30/fox-news-sally-kohn-paul-ryan_n_1842580.html?utm_hp_ref=politics&ir=Politics)

Paul Ryan's speech at the Republican National Convention on Wednesday was full of lies, according to Fox News contributor Sally Kohn.

According to Fox News columnist Sally Kohn, vice presidential nominee Paul Ryan's speech at the Republican National Convention on Wednesday "was an apparent attempt to set the world record for the greatest number of blatant lies and misrepresentations slipped into a single political speech."

"On this measure, while it was Romney who ran the Olympics, Ryan earned the gold," Kohn wrote.

In a surprising move, Fox News joined CNN, The Huffington Post, the *Washington Post's* Wonkblog (, and ThinkProgress in publishing a fact-check of the Republican vice presidential nominee's speech, finding that the speech was full of lies and misleading assertions.

Kohn, who describes herself as a "progressive voice on Fox News," wrote in her Thursday column that though Ryan came off as likable during his speech, his misrepresentations and omissions "caused a much larger problem for himself and his running mate."

In contrast, several Fox News commentators praised Ryan's speech on air after the event, without mentioning his misleading claims, according to Media Matters.

In her column, Kohn called out four lies in Ryan's speech. She criticized Ryan for blaming President Obama for the shutdown of a General Motors plant in Janesville, Wis., that actually was closed during the Bush administration. She also knocked Ryan for pinning the blame for S&P's downgrade of U.S. debt on Obama, when Republicans in Congress helped precipitate the downgrade by threatening to refuse to raise the debt ceiling.

"The good news is that the Romney-Ryan campaign has likely created dozens of new jobs among the legions of additional fact checkers that media outlets are rushing to hire to sift through the mountain of cow dung that flowed from Ryan's mouth," Kohn wrote.

You can read Sally Kohn's full takedown of Paul Ryan's speech for Fox News here:

<http://www.foxnews.com/opinion/2012/08/30/paul-ryans-speech-in-three-words/#ixzz251rvLkSe>.

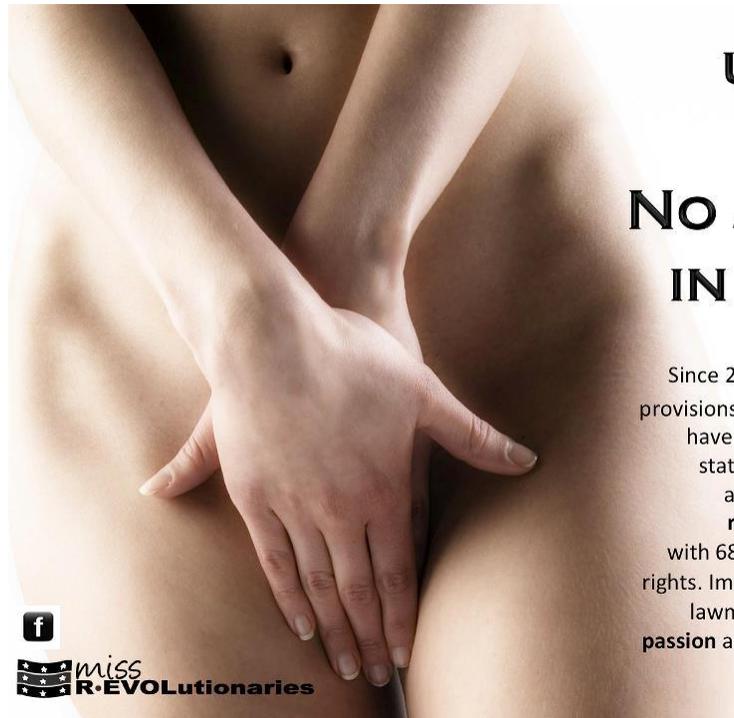




“Mitt has never let his success go to his head,” Mrs. Romney said. “Take away the seven-thousand-square-foot house in La Jolla and the bank account in the Caymans, he’s still the same fun-loving boy who pinned a gay kid to the ground and cut off his hair.” *-The Borowitz Report*

OTHER 98

Good one.



**UMMM,
NOPE!
No JOBS
IN HERE!**

Since 2010, **1,100** provisions, or legislative acts, have been introduced in state legislative houses addressing women's **reproductive rights**, with 68% **restricting** those rights. Imagine if those same lawmakers had as much **passion** and **interest** in fixing the economy!



MISS R-EVOLutionaries

from MoveOn.org:

Last night, Paul Ryan lied to the American people. Some journalists and outlets covered Ryan's lies. But others failed to check the facts and didn't call Ryan out on his brazen lies.

In this crucial election, news reporters have an obligation to educate the public about the facts regarding the major issues and call out the candidates every time they lie.

That's why I created a petition urging the major news corporations—ABC, CBS, NBC, CNN, FOX, and MSNBC—to live up to their obligation to report the truth. The petition says:

Mainstream media: Fact-check and call out candidates when they lie. You have an obligation as journalists to educate the public on the facts of the major campaign issues.

Here is a list of five lies that Paul Ryan told when he gave his speech at the Republican National Convention last night. Every single news outlet should report on these lies.

1. Lie: President Obama is the "greatest threat" to Medicare.

Truth: Obama didn't make any cuts to Medicare benefits; he made cuts to provider reimbursements, to improve cost efficiency and extend the fiscal security of Medicare by eight years. According to the Medicare actuary, "[Obama's] Affordable Care Act makes important changes to the Medicare program and substantially improves its financial outlook."¹

But Ryan actually does want to cut benefits. He proposed dismantling Medicare and replacing it with a voucher system, leaving millions of seniors to come up with more money to pay for care out of pocket.^{2,3}

2. Lie: President Obama didn't save a General Motors plant in Wisconsin.

Truth: First, Obama wasn't even in office when the GM plant closed. Second, Obama never made a promise to save it.⁴

3. Lie: President Obama ignored recommendations of a bipartisan debt commission.

Truth: Paul Ryan actually sat on that commission. And he led Republicans in voting down the commission's own recommendation. So the commission never gave a report to Obama, because Ryan himself voted to kill the report before it could.⁵

4. Lie: President Obama is responsible for the downgrading of the U.S. Credit Rating

Truth: House Republicans, including Paul Ryan, held the full faith and credit of the United States hostage to try to ransom it for trillions of dollars in cuts to social programs without increasing taxes on the wealthy one dime. Standard & Poors said specifically, "We have changed our assumption on [revenue] because the majority of Republicans in Congress continue to resist any measure that would raise revenues." That's why our nation's credit rating was downgraded.^{6,7}

5. Lie: Ryan wants to protect the "weak."

Truth: Ryan's biggest feat in his political career was proposing a budget with dramatic cuts to programs benefiting the poor. He'd cut Medicaid by one third, take away health care insurance from 30 million Americans, and cut Pell Grants for 1 million students. All so that he could give more tax breaks to the rich.⁸

Click here to add your name to my SignOn.org petition urging ABC, CBS, NBC, CNN, FOX, and MSNBC to call out candidates when they lie, and then pass it along to your friends:

<http://signon.org/sign/tell-mainstream-media>.

Thanks! –Brenda Witt

Sources:

¹"Fact check: Paul Ryan at the RNC," *USA Today*, Aug. 30, 2012, <http://www.moveon.org/r?r=279602&id=50188-20195165-Tfe59Dx&t=8>.

²"Undoing Obama Medicare cuts may backfire on Romney," *The Boston Globe*, Aug. 18, 2012, <http://www.moveon.org/r?r=279597&id=50188-20195165-Tfe59Dx&t=9>.

³"Romney-Ryan Medicare Plan Would Cost 29-Year-Olds \$331,200: Report," Huffington Post, Aug. 27, 2012, <http://www.moveon.org/r?r=279596&id=50188-20195165-Tfe59Dx&t=10>

⁴"Paul Ryan Misleads With GM Plant Closure Tale," Huffington Post, Aug. 29, 2012, <http://www.moveon.org/r?r=279598&id=50188-20195165-Tfe59Dx&t=11>.

⁵"Fact Check: Paul Ryan misleads on debt panel's spending cut plan," CNN, Aug. 30, 2012, <http://www.moveon.org/r?r=279608&id=50188-20195165-Tfe59Dx&t=12>.

⁶"Top 5 Fibs In Paul Ryan's Convention Speech," Talking Points Memo, Aug. 30, 2012, <http://www.moveon.org/r?r=279595&id=50188-20195165-Tfe59Dx&t=13>.

⁷"Paul Ryan Address: Convention Speech Built On Demonstrably Misleading Assertions," Huffington Post, Aug. 30, 2012, <http://www.moveon.org/r?r=279604&id=50188-20195165-Tfe59Dx&t=14>.

⁸"4 Ways Paul Ryan's Budget Would Devastate The Poor," ThinkProgress, Aug. 17, 2012, <http://www.moveon.org/r?r=279605&id=50188-20195165-Tfe59Dx&t=15>.

"Lyin' Ryan: All the Media Pushback" by middlegirl, Daily Kos

Aug. 30, 2012, (<http://www.dailykos.com/story/2012/08/30/1125935/-LYIN-RYAN-ALL-THE-MEDIA-PUSHBACK?detail=hide>)

This diary is a collection of all the media push back (so far) that Paul Ryan has received. I intend to tweet this list far and wide. Please feel free to add to the list and hopefully I will know how to update the diary. Thanks!

[Continue reading at Daily Kos...](#)

"More Arizona Guns with the Mexican Cartels?" by Christina Boomer, ABC15.com

Oct. 26, 2010, (<http://www.abc15.com/dpp/news/state/atf-said-you-can-help-keep-guns-away-from-mexican-cartels>)

(PHOENIX) Weapons that trace back to dealers and sellers in Arizona are being found at various Mexican crime scenes, according to William Newell, Special Agent in Charge of ATF's Phoenix Division.

"Mexico is in a tough, tough situation right now, they are at war against a very, very violent, vicious group of thugs," said Newell.

He explained how as the Mexican government puts pressure on cartels, the demand for high-powered weapons like a 50-caliber rifle goes up.

"Individuals we've arrested in the United States trafficking 50-caliber firearms, defendants who have cooperated and given us statements, as well as our own information from Mexico that the cartels are interesting in 50-caliber firearms because a lot of their targets, be it rival drug cartel leadership as well as government officials they are going after, are riding around in armored vehicles and a 50-caliber bullet would easily penetrate that."

At various Mexican crime scenes, Newell said they are finding weapons that trace back to dealers and sellers in Arizona.

"We have agents throughout Mexico, I go to Mexico all the time, I see US-sourced firearms there all the time," he said. "A large percentage of those firearms that they illegally acquire and illegally traffic to Mexico are from the U.S. and a large percentage are from Arizona."

Customs and Border Protection said the number of weapon seizures along the border doubled from 19 last fiscal year to about 40 this fiscal year.

Newell said when criminals can't buy guns legally, they hire straw buyers to do it for them.

ATF has been tracking an uptick in the number of female straw buyers and believe the economy might be playing a role.

"Females specifically because they get paid two, three hundred dollars, it's quick money," He said.

But lying on a federal form, and to the dealer, to buy a gun for someone else is a felony.

"[You are] committing a serious federal felony," Newell explained. "And you are also putting guns in the hands of potentially some very violent criminals because those guns are more than likely going to violent criminals in the U.S. as well as in Mexico."

Then there are also private sellers. These are people who are selling their private collections and therefore do not have to be licensed. You'll find private sellers at gun shows. Newell said when a private seller sells a gun no form is required; the seller doesn't even need to jot down the name of the buyer. They just need to reasonably guess that the person wishing to buy a gun isn't a prohibited buyer.

That means they were not convicted of a felony, dishonorably discharged from the military, the subject of a court order involving domestic violence or in the country illegally among some other factors.

"Unfortunately there are criminals who take advantage of that fact and will actually seek out private sellers to buy guns because they know they don't have to fill out paperwork," Newell said.

That is why ATF is trying to get the word out, first to potential straw purchasers: lie to buy a gun for someone else and you are looking at up to 10 years in prison.

As for private sellers, "Take as much information from that person as possible even though you are not a licensed dealer so that in case that gun is in fact used in a crime you can say 'yes I sold it to this person on this date.'"

Newell believes working to help keep guns out of the hands of Mexico's cartels, "will support our efforts to keep that violence from coming across the border."

John Velleco, Director of Federal Affairs for Gun Owners of America, a non-profit group that advocates for the Second Amendment, shares these points:

1. The types of weapons frequently used by cartels are often full autos, grenades and other explosives that are either completely illegal for civilians to own in the U.S., or very difficult and expensive to purchase. Many of the weapons we see dramatized in the news are simply not available to purchase at U.S. gun shows or gun stores.
2. Mexican drug cartels have billions of dollars at their disposal. They can buy their weapons from rogue nations and other bad actors and have them imported by land or sea with their own planes and vessels. As just one small example as to how much money moves through their hands, consider the alleged half million dollar bribe to the former Mexico drug czar Jose Luis Santiago Vasconcelos. \$500,000 dollars in bribes to ONE person, just to grease the skids to practice their illicit trade, is a good indication that most of their weapons are not coming into their country one gun at a time from U.S. gun shows.
3. Federally licensed gun dealers (FFLs) must always submit purchasers to a criminal background check run by the FBI, whether the sale is made at a gun store or gun show. If the check comes up clean, the purchase could go through. If a dealer has a "bad feeling" about a purchaser, he or she can let the authorities know, but dealers would open themselves up to lawsuits if they simply denied a sale because a customer "looked" a certain way.
4. Gun control advocates have for years been trying to regulate private firearms sales at gun shows. Millions of law-abiding gun owners buy, sell and trade their personal property at gun shows, and such transactions have been dubbed by gun control advocates as the "gun show loophole."

Besides being blatantly unconstitutional, there are a multitude of problems with regulating private sales, such as placing an enormous burden on the manpower and financial resources of law enforcement that could be better spent actually going after criminals. And by definition, if private sales at gun shows were regulated, all other private sales would become the next "loophole," placing additional strains on the law enforcement system. There are also serious concerns about gun owner registration by the government if private sales were to be regulated.

5. Despite the misinformation Mexico President Calderon gave in his speech to the U.S. Congress this year, individual American gun owners are not supplying the vast majority of guns to Mexican cartels. Calderon threw out the number of "75,000" guns being seized in three years, and then said that of the gun traced over 80 percent were traced back to the U.S. It turns out that the actual, raw number of guns traced back to the U.S. is somewhere between 2,000 and 7,000 a year—a mere fraction of the guns seized by the Mexican police. Most of the guns are simply not traced.

6. The individual right to keep and bear arms by law-abiding citizens should not be infringed upon as a result of the lawlessness of another country, just as it should not be jeopardized due to criminal actions within this country.

7. The inability of both countries to control violence along the border in no way makes a case for more gun control. In fact, as violence spills over the border and into our streets, Americans have all the more need to be able to defend themselves and their loved ones with firearms.

20120830-19 20:49 SteveM Fw: "Militarization of Texas Highway Patrol"

Now this is what we call "Texas Proud" and we will not be outdone! If you guys have a connection in Austin, I would love a ride on this little boat.

[Source of original email unknown, but thought to be: (Feb. 13, 2012)
<http://www.professionalsoldiers.com/forums/showthread.php?t=36815>. -SteveB]

Anyone for a boat ride???

As many know, we here in Texas have a border problem. Lake Falcon is a lake that borders Texas and Mexico. Last year several boaters were killed by drug cartel folks from the other side. We are now aware that the automatic weapons used in the killings were probably from "Fast and Furious". When Texas joined the Union as a sovereign nation in 1836 we retained the right to have a Navy to ward off the Mexicans since the United States refused to protect us. This is our first Naval vessel of this century, small but potent. It will soon be safe to fish and boat on the Lake Falcon this summer.

Just about every Texan is prepared to be in a gun fight, and you can't have enough guns.

The TEXAS DPS - New 36 ft. Patrol/Gunboat (pictured at the Homer Garrison Law Enforcement Academy, in Austin)

Designed and built to patrol Falcon Lake . . . The armaments onboard include 5 - static mounted [2 dual & 1 single] FN M240B 7.62x51 mm NATO Light machine guns, 2 - Barrett .50 BMG Sniper Rifles, and other assorted 5.56 rifles, 9mm sub machine guns, and grenade launchers.

MEXICAN PIRATES ? "Bring 'em on!"

AWSOME, JUST FRIGGIN AWSOME. JUST THE PHOTOS SCARE ME!

NINE HUNDRED HORSEPOWER ARE YOU KIDDING ME?

This should do the job, You would think, they'd get the message.....Don't Mess With Texas!!!!!!

"Militarization of Texas Highway Patrol" by Silver Shield, Don'tTreadOnMe

Jan. 20, 2012 (<http://dont-tread-on.me/?p=12675>)

How long until all of these fancy speed boats and armored personnel carriers these towns are buying under the war on "drugs" and "terror" are turned on us?







20120830-21 22:57 SteveB "Strange, Very Strange, Dangerously Strange"

"Strange, Very Strange, Dangerously Strange" by Robert Wolff, OpEdNews

Aug. 30, 2012, (<http://www.opednews.com/articles/Strange-very-strange-dan-by-robert-wolff-120830-518.html>)

There are strangenesses, situations, concepts, words, that make me sit up but that few people, if any, even question. Americans think of health care as insurance through private, for profit, companies, that is strange enough. But nobody to my knowledge has noticed that teeth and eyes are not included in health insurance. Isn't that strange?

True, Medicare is a Government, program, something that a large group of people rant and rave about because they think private for profit companies could do it cheaper or better. That makes no sense to me, because the private companies have to make a profit. We pay them more than what they pay us when, if, we need it. Isn't that obvious?

I am more than old enough to have Medicare. Medicare is wonderful if you are in a hospital. Medicare pays for every bandaid the hospital charges. But Medicare pays only a portion of visits to a doctor, obviously also a part of health care. Here, Medicare pays about half of what it costs to see a doctor, who makes 10 minute appointments, sends me to private, for profit, companies, called labs, that do X-rays, test urine, blood, etc. I am very lucky because my union pays for my various insurances -- yes, plural. One for teeth, one for eyes, one for tests, one for X-rays, and one for all that Medicare does not pay when I see a doctor. And a most important insurance that pays for most of the drugs a doctor prescribes. Recently got a prescription for eye drops to clear conjunctivitis. I paid \$5 at the pharmacy, one of the insurances paid the rest. A month or so later found out the real cost for this tiny, tiny plastic squeeze bottle was \$105. The print on the tiny thing is so tiny that I cannot read it but my guess is that it holds less than a quarter ounce. And yes the Government pays for Medicare, but it is administered by six different private companies. Here, when making an appointment to see a doctor the first question is always which of the six administrator companies pays the doctor for my Medicare. Most doctors will not accept two of the six because they do not pay for six months or more. All that is very strange.

The most strange of all, of course, is that this country pays twice what any other industrialized country pays for "health care" and yet, according to the statistics of the WHO (World Health Organization), we are far from being number one in "health." We are number 18. Strange squared.

If you want to drive a car you have to have insurance. Yes, we can choose a company and the cost will depend on age, driving record and who knows what else. It is the law, everybody has to pay and as far as I know nobody has every questioned that. But when the government makes a law that requires almost everybody to pay for health insurance the other party loudly proclaims that that is against the Constitution and the first thing they promise to do when/if they come to power is scrap "Obamacare" -- leaving 50 million Americans without any health insurance. The new Government health insurance plan (not fully going into effect until 2014) still is through for-profit health insurance companies and therefore expensive. If the clause that says (almost) everyone has to have insurance is removed that of course will make health care much more expensive. All strange, strange.

What we call health care is really medical care. Not the same thing. Health care would be if there were in every neighborhood a very cheap or free clinic where a doctor or nurse practitioner has time and inclination to get to know a person, her or his life style, circumstances. For less than \$100 an overweight boy of 13 can be helped to change his diet. If the boy gets to be a 31 year old man who has never seen a doctor, now even more overweight with advanced diabetes, it will cost more than \$100,000 to treat him. I find it very strange that those who plan what we call health care don't know that.

If we would cut the Pentagon's budget in half and stop making wars all over the world we would solve the debt crisis that all reasonable people tell me is the consequence of fighting two unbelievably sloppily waged wars. Do we really think that occupying a country wins the hearts and minds of people? I lived through five years of the German occupation of the Netherlands, and I am convinced that any occupation by a foreign country makes the occupied hate the occupiers. That we cannot figure that out is very, very strange.

And does anyone believe that we can create a stable and friendly democracy by training soldiers and policemen? Is that what makes a democracy? Too strange.

I have never heard anyone wonder why a cell phone network makes money at both ends of a phone call. I have no control over who calls me. During this election year many politicians call cell phones. Whether we want or not we must pay. Strange or wrong?

I read somewhere that there are now 29 (?) companies that filter all our phone calls and emails and do exotic things for our "security" by preventing "terrorists" from attacking us. Isn't it strange that not one of them could foresee the horrible slaughters of Americans by Americans? Shouldn't they have looked into the actions of a man who owned three or four guns, including an assault weapon, who ordered 600,000 bullets over the internet? How

many millions of tax money these companies with thousands of employees get is of course a secret. I find that dangerously strange.

The year of an unusually warm winter, almost no snow; a summer with weeks upon weeks of 100 ++ temperatures, wild fires out of control. An election year --and neither party has said one word about climate change. I find that very strange. Frighteningly dangerously strange.

(Robert Wolff lives on the Big Island, called Hawai'i. His website is <http://www.wildwolff.com>)

[20120830-22](#) 23:59 SteveB Photo: Nautor Swan 90

<http://www.cruisersforum.com/forums/f47/ketchs-vs-sloops-21635-12.html>



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

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

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

<http://www.FriendsOfTheMiddle.org>
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