



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

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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, Wainwright, 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.

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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. Unmasked 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.

[20120803-03](#) 11:27 SteveM Graphic: Obamamagic #1



[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: "Heaven Recovering Following Tractor Accident" (reply to MarthaH, FotM Newsletter #196)
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What a horrifying experience!

20120803-08	14:59	Tom	Movie: <i>Total Recall 2012</i>
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<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: <i>Red Dawn</i> Re-Dux
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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.

[20120804-02](#) 05:56 SteveG Graphic: Corruption American-Style



[20120803-11](#) 18:11 SteveB Fw: Who Is Fighting for Middle Class Tax Cuts? Obama vs. Romney Personal Income Tax Calculator

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 Fehrnstrom 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.

Romeny 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.

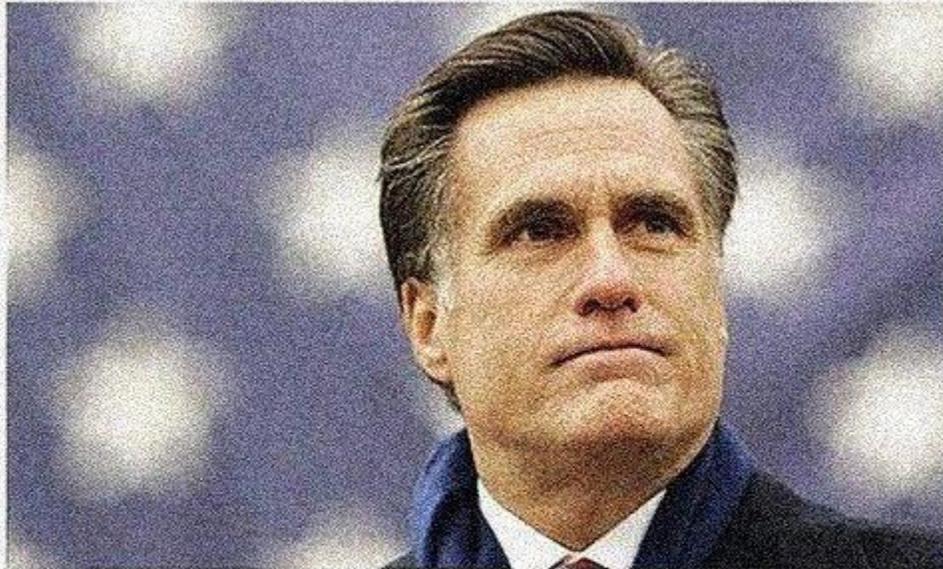
20120805-23

17:53

SteveG

Quote: Napoleon Bonaparte: "Money Has No Motherland"

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

20120804-05

13:54

SteveB

"When Did the GOP Become the Whiners?"

"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"

"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 Hanauer 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.

20120805-03	05:57	SteveB	“Towards a ‘Soft Invasion’? The Launching of a ‘Humanitarian War’ against Syria”
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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.charliedanielssoapbox.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)

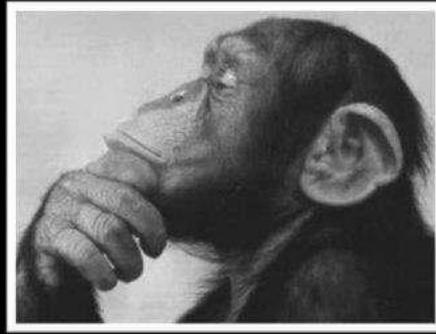
Typically I associated LBJ with the Vietnam War – LBJ how many babies you kill today. I have gone back looked at his legislation, looked at his life growing up in Texas, looked at the influences on his life, and how he grew the knowledge/abilities to run a government – an amazing person. I have also 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.



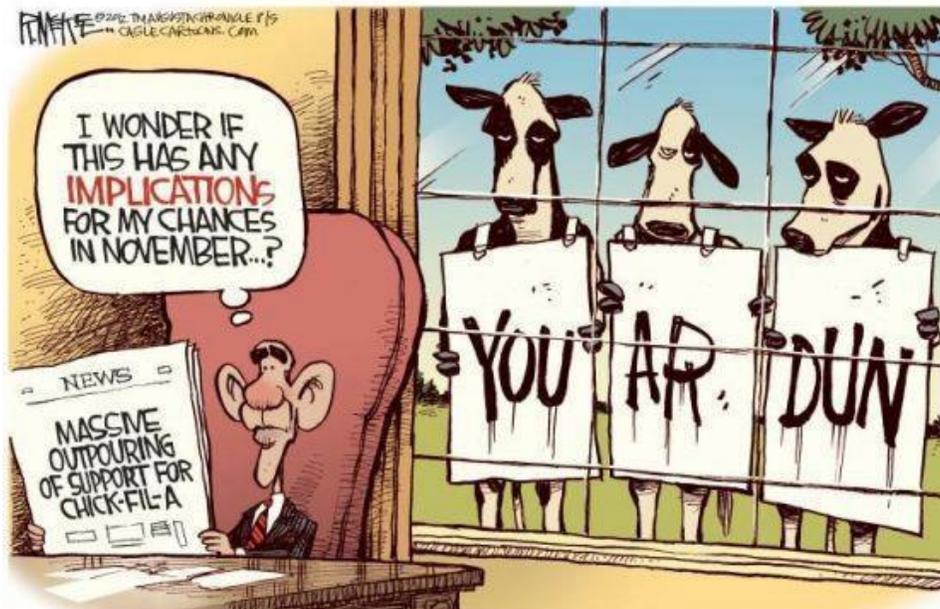
INTELLIGENT

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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