



FRIENDS OF THE MIDDLE **NEWSLETTER #200 — AUG. 9, 2012**

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What Love Can Do

(posted by Steven W. Baker / SteveB, Aug. 9, 2012)

Sometimes it's difficult to remember the power of what the heart, the human spirit, can do when it embraces the meaning of life, which was there all along, perhaps unrecognized and undiscovered.

"Photographer Captures Tender Moment Between Man and His Sick Dog in Lake Superior" by Cavan Sieczkowski, Huffington Post

Aug. 8, 2012, (http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/08/08/man-dog-lake-superior-photo-n_1755609.html?utm_hp_ref=mostpopular)



They say a dog is a man's best friend, but to John Unger, a Wisconsin resident, his dog, Schoep, means everything.

Unger adopted Schoep, named after the famous Wisconsin ice cream, when he was just a puppy, and the two have been together ever since. Now, at 19 years old, Schoep has arthritis and has trouble sleeping, the Pioneer Press reports. Unger found that water is therapeutic for his pained buddy, so he takes Schoep into Lake Superior and lulls him to sleep.

Photographer Hannah Stonehouse Hudson, owner of Stonehouse Photography and a friend of Unger's, decided to capture the relationship between the man and his dog down by the water.

"This photo was from a last minute session," the Bayfield, Wis., photographer told The Huffington Post in an email. "We had been trying to get together for weeks, but it kept not happening because of my travel schedule for Stonehouse. We finally got together last Tuesday (the 31st). I had about 5 minutes to shoot and this is what I caught -- a man and his dog. John loving his Schoep, and Schoep trusting John so much he falls asleep in the buoyancy of the water. This is in no way posed - I hate posed photos - they never, ever capture the true essence of anything."

Stonehouse Hudson decided to post the photo to Facebook, where she described the pair's loving relationship.

"This 19 year old Shep being cradled in his father's arms last night in Lake Superior," she wrote in the Facebook post, which has received more than 207,000 likes and 116,000 shares as of Wednesday morning.

"Shep falls asleep every night when he is carried into the lake. The buoyancy of the water soothes his arthritic bones. Lake Superior is very warm right now, so the temp of the water is perfect. I was so happy I got to capture this moment for John. By the way, John rescued Shep as an 8 month old puppy, and he's been by his side through many adventures," she continued.

Stonehouse Hudson never imagined the tender moment she captured would eventually go viral and touch the hearts of hundreds of thousands.

"John lives for this dog, and for the dog's comfort," she told HuffPost. "My mother has a saying, 'Everything is for the comfort and convenience of the Dog.' John is a prime example of this."

Stonehouse Hudson regularly photographs dogs as part of her profession. She offers pet sessions and often takes pictures of dogs at weddings. To give back, she does free shoots of hard-to-place animals for local shelters.

She said the photograph of Unger and Schoep is more than just a moment frozen in time; it's an everlasting reminder.

"I want people to identify with this photo, and remember a time when they felt safe, loved, and cared for," Stonehouse Hudson said. "Then I want them to channel those feelings and pay it forward! There is way too much negativity in this world - maybe with this one photo we can start to change things just a tiny bit."

UPDATE: John Lundy of the *Duluth News Tribune* interviewed John Unger, who described how Schoep saved his life. After breaking up with his former fiancée, Unger had been having suicidal thoughts. "To be honest with you, I don't think I'd be here if I didn't have Schoep with me (that night)," Unger told Lundy. "He just snapped me out of it. I don't know how to explain it. He just snapped me out of it. ... I just want to do whatever I can for this dog because he basically saved my ass." Minnesota Public Radio reports that the popularity of the photo has spurred an outpouring of support in the form of donations to help pay for laser treatment for Schoep's arthritis.

Intrepid Integrity (for Dusty)

We laughingly gave the little golden ball of fur
A big name: Dustin Moondog Biter Baker
But we just called him Dusty, for short
He was the truest friend I ever had.

He grew up to rule the dog part of our town
For years, most of the puppies born were his
Half Golden Retriever and half whatever
Because we let him go where he wanted.

He took care of himself pretty well
Except when he killed the neighbor's duck
And once, after being gone unusually long,
We got a call that he'd been hit by a truck.

He'd bring back almost anything I could throw
Including rocks on frigid Lake Michigan's bottom
In tall grass he'd circle, looking back at me,
Thinking about the trajectory from where I stood.

I'm sure it was Dusty who invented the game
We used to play on the frozen lake by our house
I'd skate out to the middle, Dusty following, smiling
Then I'd throw a stick as far as I could.

I would skate and he would scramble
As fast as we could go, racing for that stick
If I got there first, then I won that round
And I'd throw the stick to race for it again.

But if he beat me and got the prize, round two began
To win, Dusty had to get the stick to shore
Before I could get close enough to leap and tackle him
So he'd run and I'd skate as if all depended on it.

He was big and fast and strong, but ice was my equalizer
If I skated my fastest and was lucky
I'd catch up, launch myself at him and bring him down
Both of us tumbling in a pile across the crust of snow.

He could be gentle, though, as well as boisterous
When my three-year-old daughter got her first skates
I held her mittened hand as we went onto the lake
Then I noticed that Dusty held her other in his mouth.

He was never jealous of the kids as they entered our lives
He never held a grudge if I had to punish him
He always loved us with all his mighty golden heart
He was a better friend than I have ever been able to be.

When, after years of loyalty, he lay dying at the vet's of cancer
 I wasn't able to go see him to say a last goodbye
 But it was like losing a son and I'm not sure I could have
 Faced the hurt imploring loving look in his big brown eyes.

I don't believe dogs are much different than we humans
 Only, in Dusty's case, he was more noble than most
 He deserves as much as good people to be in Heaven
 I just hope I'm good enough to see him there someday.

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<u>20120808-01</u>	06:14	Tom	Video: Shooter Who Aided Officer Gives His Account of Peach House RV Park Incident
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Watch the interview of this hero. This is Texas greatness.

(<http://youtu.be/4g1n8cmwhIY>) Vic Stacy, the resident of Peach House RV Park who came to the aid of Early Police Sgt. Steven Means Sunday after two people were killed by Charles Ronald Conner, insists he's not a hero — he just did what had to be done. Stacy told the Brownwood Bulletin when he saw that the police officer couldn't get a good shot at the gunman, "I jumped in there, put that first shot in him, and knocked him down." Here are portions of the interview.

20120808-02	07:14	MarthaH	"School's Policy Requires Girls to Take Pregnancy Tests"
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"School's Policy Requires Girls to Take Pregnancy Tests" by Lisa Flam, NBC News/TODAY

Aug. 7, 2012, (http://today.msnbc.msn.com/id/48554183/ns/today-back_to_school/t/schools-policy-requires-girls-take-pregnancy-tests/#.JCOcX51ISEo)

Calling a charter school's policy on pregnant students illegal, Louisiana education officials will require the Delhi Charter School to drop its classroom ban on pregnant students and the ability to mandate pregnancy tests for students suspected of being pregnant.

The state-funded school in Delhi, La., says in its "Student Pregnancy Policy" that pregnant girls should leave school or study at home.

The American Civil Liberties Union of Louisiana brought attention to the policy on Monday, calling on the school to drop the rule or face legal action. By Tuesday evening, state officials agreed that the policy violated federal law. "We are requiring an immediate change to the policy," the Louisiana State Department of Education said in a statement Tuesday night.

A letter dated Monday from Michael Higgins, director of law and policy in the Louisiana office of school choice, to the school says it has until Aug. 16 to provide documentation showing a change in policy. In the letter, released to TODAY.com Tuesday evening, the state asks for a policy that "does not discriminate against pregnant students or students perceived to be pregnant" and says that "under no circumstances shall the school require any student to take a pregnancy test."

The school, which has approximately 700 students from kindergarten to 12th grade, said earlier in the day that although there have never been any complaints about the policy, it was under legal review "to ensure that necessary revisions are made so that our school is in full compliance with constitutional law."

The ACLU sent the school a letter on Monday, saying that the policy violates federal law and the U.S. Constitution, and threatening legal action if it is not revised immediately.

"The policy discriminates against female students not just for being pregnant but even for the possibility that they might be pregnant, and treats them as though pregnancy was some kind of contagious disease by telling them they can't stay in school," Marjorie Esman, executive director of the American Civil Liberties Union of Louisiana, told TODAY.com. "That is a gross violation of the law and their right to have an education."

The ACLU says the policy violates Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, the federal law that bans discrimination based on gender in educational programs, as well as the equal protection and due process clauses of the Constitution. The policy is discriminatory because it treats girls who are pregnant or suspected of being pregnant differently from all other students, the ACLU says.

"What a school should do is treat pregnancy as any other medical condition and allow the student to participate fully in anything that she's medically capable of participating in," Esman said, noting the policy doesn't say anything about male students who father children.

The Delhi school policy says that if a student is suspected of being pregnant, a parent conference will be held and the school will have the right to require female students to take pregnancy tests and refer those girls to a doctor of its choice.

Pregnant students can't attend classes on campus; they must study at home. Girls suspected of being pregnant who refuse to take the test will be forced to study at home or leave school.

In outlining its policy, the school mentions the high expectations it has for students and the school's high standards. "Delhi Charter School has established an environment whereby the conduct of its students must be in keeping with the school's goals and objectives relative to character development," the policy reads. "The Delhi Charter School curriculum will maintain an environment in which all students will learn and exhibit acceptable character traits that govern language, gestures, physical actions, and written words."

According to the ACLU, 70 percent of teen moms leave school, in part because of illegal discrimination.

20120808-03 07:48 MarthaH Fw: The Hotel Bill

An older lady decided to give herself a big treat for her significant 70th birthday by staying overnight in an expensive hotel.

When she checked out next morning, the desk clerk handed her a bill for \$250.00.

She exploded and demanded to know why the charge was so high. "It's a nice hotel but the rooms certainly aren't worth \$250.00 for just an overnight stay! I didn't even have breakfast."

The clerk told her that \$250.00 is the 'standard rate', so she insisted on speaking to the Manager.

The Manager appeared and, forewarned by the desk clerk, announced: "This hotel has an Olympic-sized pool and a huge conference centre which are available for use."

"But I didn't use them," she said.

"Well, they are here, and you could have," explained the Manager.

He went on to explain that she could also have seen one of the in-hotel shows for which the hotel is famous. "We have the best entertainers from the world over performing here," the Manager said.

"But I didn't go to any of those shows," she said.

"Well, we have them, and you could have," the Manager replied.

No matter what amenity the Manager mentioned, she replied, "But I didn't use it!" and the Manager countered with his standard response.

After several minutes discussion with the Manager unmoved, she decided to pay, wrote a check and gave it to him.

The Manager was surprised when he looked at the check. "But madam, this check is for only \$50.00."

"That's correct. I charged you \$200.00 for sleeping with me," she replied.

"But I didn't!" exclaims the very surprised Manager.

"Well, too bad, I was here, and you could have."

Don't mess with Senior Citizens

20120808-04	08:44	NormF	Re: Proposed Constitutional Amendment: NO SECRET MONEY! (reply to SteveB, FotM Newsletter #197)
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Well, last I checked, no citizen is allowed to withhold information about their finances. (from the government ect...)

20120808-05	10:56	SteveB	Video: "10 Unexplained Scientific Phenomena"
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"10 Unexplained Scientific Phenomena" by MSN

July 25, 2012, (http://www.bing.com/videos/watch/video/10-unexplained-scientific-phenomena/ufdyhk3b?q=All-Time+10s&rel=msn&from=en-us_msnhp&form=MSNRL)

They've stumped the greatest minds on the planet: presenting 10 phenomena that science has yet to explain.

20120808-06	11:50	SteveB	Fw: MoveOn Action: Become a Movement Maker!
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from MoveOn:

We're getting beat and it's time to wake up.

The unlimited money ushered in by Citizens United means the right wing could outspend progressives 2 to 1 this election—and Romney's just out raised President Obama for the third straight month.¹

Congressional Republicans sabotaged our economic recovery by crashing the debt ceiling and blocking every jobs measure put forward by the president. Republican governors drastically cut jobs, offsetting private sector job gains. **Now Romney is blaming Obama for high unemployment.**

Republicans passed Jim Crow style voter suppression laws that will disenfranchise millions of progressive voters, targeting low income folks, people of color, and the young.²

And the worst of it is—we're still asleep. Because despite all this, a Gallup Poll shows that Democrats are much less enthusiastic about voting than Republicans.³ **That means we lose.**

MoveOn members are 7 million strong. We have a proven record of creative, dynamic, and grassroots election campaigning. From launching the most talked about political ads to running the most inventive and effective voter contact programs, **MoveOn can provide the shot in the arm that progressives need right now.**

But to do that we need to double our number of "movement makers"—the members who make a regular monthly donation—from 15,000 to 30,000. **Can you help join the wake up call?**

In past elections MoveOn members funded one of the most covered political ads, for the least money, in history.⁴ We also produced one of the most effective voter contact programs ever studied.⁵ **But with a torrent of 1% money being unleashed, we need to double the impact of our election plan:**

1. Showing America that Mitt Romney is running for President of the 1% through creative ads and daring actions on the ground.
2. Fighting back against Republican voter suppression of the Rising American Electorate—the people of color, single women, and young people who helped elect President Obama in 2008.
3. Making calls, knocking on doors, and using innovative new technology to register and turn out as many progressive voters as humanly possible.

Just imagine taking everything we can do together and doubling it. That's what our goal of reaching 30,000 movement makers is all about. For a small regular donation each month you can become a MoveOn movement maker and make that happen.

Yes, I'll chip in \$5 each month and become a movement maker: <https://pol.moveon.org/donate/forward.html>.

No, but I can make a one-time donation: <https://pol.moveon.org/donate/donate.html>.

Contributing to any cause or community of people, especially making a regular contribution, is an act of great trust and faith. Today you can place your faith in a community of 7 million fellow MoveOn members and **trust that your contribution will help empower their passion, commitment, and energy.**

Thanks for all you do. –Justin, Emily, Victoria, Robin, and the rest of the team

Sources:

¹"GOP groups plan record \$1 billion blitz," Politico, May 30, 2012
<http://www.politico.com/news/stories/0512/76849.html>.

"Romney's July fundraising outpaces Obama's," *The Washington Post*, August 6, 2012
<http://www.moveon.org/r?r=278396&id=48295-20195165-5PWHVwx&t=6>.

²"New Voting Restrictions May Affect More than Five Million," Brennan Center for Justice at New York University School of Law, October 3, 2011. <http://www.moveon.org/r?r=276600&id=48295-20195165-5PWHVwx&t=7>.

³"Where's the Outrage?" *The New York Times*, October 3, 2011. <http://www.moveon.org/r?r=278237&id=48295-20195165-5PWHVwx&t=8>.

⁴"Censored at the Super Bowl," *Newsweek*, January 29, 2004
<http://www.moveon.org/r?r=277117&id=&t=8&id=48295-20195165-5PWHVwx&t=9>.

⁵"MoveOn and Voter Mobilization in 2004," Institution for Social and Policy Studies, 2006
<http://gotv.research.yale.edu/?q=node/50>.

20120808-07	12:37	SteveB	"America's 10 Largest Corporations Paid 9 Percent Average Tax Rate Last Year"
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"America's 10 Largest Corporations Paid 9 Percent Average Tax Rate Last Year" by Travis Waldron, Think Progress/NationofChange

Aug. 8, 2012, (<http://www.nationofchange.org/america-s-10-largest-corporations-paid-9-percent-average-tax-rate-last-year-1344433945>)

America's 10 most profitable corporations paid an average corporate income tax rate of just 9 percent in 2011, according to a study from financial site NerdWallet reported by the Huffington Post. The 10 companies include Wall Street banks like Wells Fargo and JP Morgan Chase, oil companies like ExxonMobil and Chevron, and tech companies like Apple, IBM, and Microsoft.

The two companies with the lowest tax rates were both oil companies. ExxonMobil paid \$1.5 billion in taxes on \$73.3 billion in earnings, a tax rate of 2 percent. Chevron's tax rate was just 4 percent. None of the companies paid anywhere near the 35 percent top corporate tax rate, providing more evidence to debunk claims that America's corporate tax rate is stunting economic growth and job creation (Despite the high marginal rate, American corporations pay one of the lowest effective corporate tax rates in the world).

The study also calculated the overall amount the companies owed in both domestic and foreign taxes. This includes deferred taxes that will, theoretically, be paid in the future, once the companies bring foreign profits back to the United States. Apple, for instance, avoided \$2.4 billion in American taxes last year by utilizing offshore tax havens.

If Republicans have their way, however, those deferred taxes may never be paid. Switching to a territorial tax system, a policy leading Republicans have considered, would allow corporations to repatriate foreign profits back to the United States nearly free of taxation, costing the country billions of dollars and thousands of jobs.

[20120808-08](#) 13:45 Art Re: Re: Lying Socialist Thieves (reply to Tom, FotM Newsletter #199)

Well I see nothing wrong with what you suggest but the difference is anyone seeking appointment to higher office in the Federal Government is required to release tax returns. Romney's father set the example and all serious contenders since, to include President Obama, have followed that excellent precedent. I'm not sure about the relevance of these other items. There are no "passport records" to my knowledge, just a passport that has stamped entry's. I have a few dozen passports now from over the years with several hundred entries. What would it tell you?. Not sure either how college transcripts would help. He went to Harvard and that has never been in question. As for Law Review papers, what would be the point? If you want to bore yourself to death, I can provide you my Masters Thesis, but it is not a pain I would normally wish anyone.

These tax returns just make sense.

[20120808-09](#) 14:24 SteveB Bolivian Bakery Biz — Update

We're moving along on the cookie front, but we're a little stuck right now waiting for the gas line to be connected from the street to our meter. It should happen by tomorrow, Friday. Meanwhile, we're continuing to work on licenses, taxes, packaging, etc. We also are getting the hood and exhaust system for the oven spec'ed and finding a contractor for the operation. As soon as we bake our first cookie in-house, we have to start hiring people. We plan on having a small army of independent salesmen/vendors.

Almost all the equipment was delivered last week—our big 300-cookie oven, 30-quart mixer, commercial refrigerator, granite-topped counter, stainless-steel tables, carts to hold the big cookie sheets, and cookie baking and cooling sheets. We still need our tables, chairs, and stools for customers and sales meetings. Our plate glass door and the window next to it had to be removed so the oven could be brought in. Our sign painter came and did his work, then our "real" sign was delivered and installed. We think it's perfect!

Construction about finished.



Marci and part of our work crew.



Sign painter.



Snickler-Doodle at night.



Glass removal for oven delivery.



20120808-10 16:21 SteveB "Another Bad Day for R0mney"

"Another Bad Day For R0mney" by Joe Klein, *Time*

Aug. 7, 2012, (<http://swampland.time.com/2012/08/07/another-bad-day-for-romney/>)

The theme of the day for the Romney campaign was, as Alex Rogers notes below, that Obama's Soft on Welfare. It sort of flopped. The factoid planted at the microscopic center of the non-story is that the Obama campaign allegedly granted states the right to request waivers from the current welfare work requirements...which is true, except for the following things:

1. The waivers would be granted only if states came up with *alternative ideas* to create jobs for people on welfare.
2. As governor of Massachusetts, Romney himself asked for such a waiver in 2005.

And, this third bit is just too good...

3. As governor, Romney offered welfare recipients free auto insurance, registration, inspections and memberships in AAA. From the original *Boston Herald* piece:

"Over 80 percent of participants have moved off of welfare," said Romney spokeswoman Gail Gitcho.

Under Romney's Car Ownership Program, the state paid out one year's insurance, inspection, excise tax, title, registration, repairs and a AAA membership for cars that were donated to welfare recipients. Under the plan, those who lost their jobs and ended up back on welfare were allowed to keep their free wheels.

Now, let me make two points:

1. This Romney—the guy who invented what the *Herald* called “Welfare Wheels”—is the same guy who launched on Rick Perry during the primaries for offering college scholarships to the children of illegal immigrants. In fact, he’s still against—maybe, I guess, but we can’t be too sure, because, well, he’s refusing to answer the question—the federal Dream Act, which would grant citizenship to such children who graduated college or served into the military. But cars for welfare recipients was, somehow, just fine. (By the way, I applaud Romney’s program and congratulate him on the 80% success rate.)

2. **How incompetent is the Romney campaign?** They keep coming up with these stupid gambits—the last was the lie that Obama opposed early voting for members of the military in Ohio—that are shot down instantaneously (everywhere but in Fox-Rush land). And worse, the Democrats—who seem to have a superior oppo team—can often produce counter-stories, like the Herald item, that make things even worse for Romney.

But there is a larger question here: How stupid does he think we are? Every day brings a mind-boggling act of untruth-telling. Last week, he told Sean Hannity that his economic plan “is very similar to the Simpson-Bowles plan.” Except for the fact that Simpson-Bowles raised \$2 trillion in revenue over the next 10 years and Romney’s plan raises...well, he won’t say, but so far he hasn’t identified one red cent. **I can’t remember a candidate so brazenly allergic to facts. What a travesty.**

20120808-11	16:28	SteveG	“Company Previously Known as Blackwater Agrees to \$7.5 Million Fine in Arms Smuggling Case”
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“Company Previously Known as Blackwater Agrees to \$7.5 Million Fine in Arms Smuggling Case” by AP

Aug. 7, 2012, (http://www.washingtonpost.com/business/company-previously-known-as-blackwater-agrees-to-75-million-fine-in-arms-smuggling-case/2012/08/07/0180ea68-e0d5-11e1-8d48-2b1243f34c85_story.html?fb_ref=sm_btn_fb)

(RALEIGH, N.C.) The international security contractor formerly known as Blackwater has agreed to pay a \$7.5 million fine to settle federal criminal charges related to arms smuggling and other crimes.

Documents unsealed Tuesday in a U.S. District Court in North Carolina said the company, now called Academi LLC, agreed to pay the fine as part of a deferred prosecution agreement to settle 17 violations.

Treasury sent a letter to British regulators that shows what many sources have already confirmed: there is a much broader probe of the London-based bank under way.

The list of violations includes possessing automatic weapons in the United States without registration, lying to federal firearms regulators about weapons provided to the king of Jordan, passing secret plans for armored personnel carriers to Sweden and Denmark without U.S. government approval and illegally shipping body armor overseas.

Federal prosecutors and law enforcement agents said the company, which has held billions in U.S. security contracts in Iraq and Afghanistan, repeatedly flouted U.S. laws.

“Compliance with these laws is critical to the proper conduct of our defense efforts and to international diplomatic relations,” said Thomas G. Walker, the U.S. Attorney for the Eastern District of North Carolina. “This prosecution is an important step to ensuring that our corporate citizens comply with these rules in every circumstance.”

Blackwater was founded in 1997 in Moyock, N.C., by former Navy SEAL Erik Prince, but the company rose to national attention after winning massive no-bid security contracts from the U.S. government at the beginning of the Iraq War.

In 2004, Iraqi insurgents in Fallujah ambushed two SUVs, killing the four armed Blackwater contractors and hanging their bodies from a bridge. In 2007, Blackwater contractors guarding a U.S. State Department convoy in Baghdad opened fire on civilian vehicles in an intersection, mistakenly thinking they were under attack. Seventeen Iraqis died.

In 2010, the company reached a \$42 million settlement with the Department of State as part of a settlement of violations of the Arms Export Control Act and the International Trafficking in Arms Regulations.

The company changed its name to Xe before being sold in 2011, becoming Academi.

Documents unsealed in federal court Thursday say prosecutors brought 17 criminal charges against Academi following a 5-year investigation.

Under the terms of the deferred prosecution agreement, the company acknowledged "responsibility for the conduct" in the 17 alleged violations and settles all charges with the government in exchange for payment of the \$7.5 million fine and assurances the company will reform its conduct. The agreement also requires future monitoring and audits for full compliance with federal firearms laws.

In a statement issued immediately after the settlement was made public, however, Academi officials denied they admitted any guilt for what was termed a "legacy matter."

"The agreement, which does not involve any guilty plea or admit to any violations, reflects the significant and tangible efforts that Academi's new ownership and leadership team have made," the statement said. "The company is fully committed to this agreement and looks forward to successfully fulfilling its obligations on this legacy matter as we continue to lead by example in our regulatory and compliance efforts."

Academi spokesman John Procter later clarified the company's position.

"There is a distinction between an admission of events taking place and an admission of guilt," he said.

Treasury sent a letter to British regulators that shows what many sources have already confirmed: there is a much broader probe of the London-based bank under way.

A clause in Academi's settlement with prosecutors bars the company from making any public statements "contradicting any aspect" of the agreement. Any such statement could allow the government to nullify the settlement, the agreement says.

Justice Department spokeswoman Robin G. Zier declined to comment Thursday on whether Academi's media release violated the terms of the settlement.

The first two criminal counts unsealed Tuesday allege Blackwater illegally exported encrypted satellite phones to Sudan in 2005. Counts three through six involve numerous arms exporting and trafficking violations, including providing a security services and a threat assessment to Sudan, providing military training to Canadian military and law enforcement personnel without a required U.S. license.

The company is also alleged to have provided technical and engineering data relating to the construction of armored personnel carriers to Sweden and Denmark from 2006 to 2008 without required State Department authorization. In 2004 and 2006, the company exported ammunition and body armor to Iraq and Afghanistan without first obtaining a U.S. government license, according to the documents.

Counts seven through 12 allege violations of various federal firearms laws as the result of the company's possession of unregistered automatic weapons at its rural North Carolina training facility. Counts 13 through 17 allege involve a Bushmaster M4 carbine, three Glock handguns and a Remington shotgun given as a gift to Jordan's King Abdullah II and his traveling entourage during a 2005 visit to Moyock.

"For an extended period of time, Academi/Blackwater operated in a manner which demonstrated systemic disregard for U.S. Government laws and regulations," said Chris Briese, Special Agent in Charge of the Charlotte Division of the FBI. "Today's announcement should serve as a warning to others that allegations of wrongdoing will be aggressively investigated."

Comment from msmart2u

The Supreme Court says corporations are people. Well, if I engage in the same sort of criminal activity that Blackwater engaged in, I get fined and go to jail for a long time. Corporations like Blackwater just have to pay a fine. How is this fair? **They should be fined and jailed.**

20120808-13	17:59	SteveB	Re: "Company Previously Known as Blackwater Agrees to \$7.5 Million Fine..." (reply to SteveG, above)
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I don't think these Blackwater guys are ever going to get clean. I guess, with a name like that (oh, ya, they changed it), it would be hard.

Did you run into them in Iraq, Art or Tom?

Our cat, Mio (one of his aliases), worked for Blackwater in Iraq. Believe me, he has some stories!

20120808-18	19:11	SteveG	Re: "Company Previously Known as Blackwater Agrees to \$7.5 Million Fine..." (reply to SteveB, above)
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When I was in high school, maybe college, I remember reading about mercenaries and how bad they were and how disgusting it was that some countries resorted to that type of warfare.

20120808-12	18:04	Dennis	"A Devil's Dictionary"
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Here's your opportunity to update your political terminology:

"A Devil's Dictionary" by Mike Lofgren, Viking Press Book Excerpt, Truthout

Aug. 8, 2012, (<http://truth-out.org/opinion/item/10739-mike-lofgren-a-devils-dictionary>)

Here's a new book based on an exclusive Truthout commentary that became a national media sensation. Inside the front cover, publisher Viking Press (Penguin) even mentions that this bombshell insider's view of Capitol Hill began as a professional and personal confession that "was posted on Truthout and read by millions." Receive a copy of Mike Lofgren's *The Party Is Over* by making a minimum contribution to Truthout by clicking here:

<https://members.truth-out.org/bgift94-gift/choose-type-donation>.

Lee, Bernays, and Gingrich have all had a lasting impact on the political use of language in America. If you seek monuments to their accomplishments, you have to look no further than your daily paper or television news program. It is to them that we owe stories about "collateral damage" rather than "dead civilians." In that spirit, allow me to offer up my own devil's dictionary of contempo-rary American political terms.

American exceptionalism: a doctrine whose proponents hold that by divine dispensation America is exempt from all laws gov-erning international norms, physics, or rationality.

Authentic: used to describe a candidate who is unaware of current events and doesn't read a newspaper, and is proud of it.

Class warfare: a technique by which teachers, nurses, firemen, and cashiers are believed to be oppressing derivatives traders and CEOs, which includes unreasonably complaining that their wages aren't keeping up with the cost of their health insurance.

Conservative: a person profoundly respectful of heritage, tradition, and old-fashioned values while preaching the revolution and strip-mining the Grand Canyon for high-sulfur coal.

Darwin's theory of evolution: an evil doctrine that denies the teachings of the Bible. Social Darwinism, on the other hand, is what made America great and is perfectly consistent with the Sermon on the Mount.

Elites: insufferable, overeducated snobs who are not real Americans and may in fact be French. Mitt Romney (Harvard MBA and JD) and George W. Bush (Yale, Harvard) have often criticized such scoundrels.

Empower: If an American worker loses his pension or Social Security, he is empowered.

Free-market capitalism: the economic system by which Halliburton gets sole-source, cost-plus government contracts.

Global warming: a hoax perpetrated by a worldwide conspiracy of biased scientists. Fortunately it is being combated by right-wing foundations, oil companies, televangelists, and other disinterested believers in objective fact.

Job creators: the truly creative engines of economic growth in our society: real-estate flippers, mortgage-backed securities bundlers, leveraged buyout specialists, dividend drawers, and hedge-fund billionaires.

Level playing field: what every lobbyist wants in the spirit of fairness. The only way to achieve it is by bribing politicians to award a sole-source contract to his client.

Liberal (pronounced libull): a satanic ideologue who is at once a socialist leveler, an elitist defender of privilege, an atheist, and a secret Muslim determined to bring sharia law to America.

Patriot: someone who loves America more than he loves the majority of the people living therein.

Populist: an advocate for the interests of "real" Americans who vehemently fights for the abolition of all government regulation of Wall Street investment banks.

Prolife: the unconditional support of the first nine months of a human being's existence. After that period has expired, the same human being has an unconditional right to be executed by the state, sent off to war, or die without health insurance.

Real Americans: the minority of Americans who look, think, and act exactly as I do.

Rogue state: a country that violates international law by committing armed aggression, torturing prisoners, assassinating opponents, and possessing weapons of mass destruction. cf: american exceptionalism

Sharia law: a fundamentalist religious doctrine imposed on a given political jurisdiction. Any resemblance to public statutes on abortion in the Commonwealth of Virginia is purely coincidental.

Take our country back: Give us what we want right now, even if we don't know what it is.

Tea Party: people covered by Medicare who hate socialized medicine.

Washington spending: the bad sort of spending that doesn't go toward earmarks to campaign contributors, subsidies to big oil, or the military's half-trillion-dollar budget. Everyone knows the Pentagon is across the Potomac in Virginia, not in Washington.

Win-win situation: see level playing field.

(Reprinted by arrangement with Viking, a member of the Penguin Group (USA) Inc., from *The Party Is Over* by Mike Lofgren.)

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20120808-15	18:05	SteveB	Re: "A Devil's Dictionary" (reply to Dennis, above)
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Very funny stuff!

20120808-14	18:11	Dennis	"Preparing to Fail"
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Military affairs...

"Preparing to Fail" by Bill Bonner, The Daily Reckoning

Aug. 8, 2012, (<http://dailyreckoning.com/preparing-to-fail/>)

(PARIS) Gore Vidal, veteran of WWII, died last week. Here's something he wrote in 2003:

I can recall thinking, when I got out of the Army in 1946, "Well, that's that. We won. And those who come after us will never need do this again." Then came the two mad wars of imperial vanity — Korea and Vietnam. They were bitter for us, not to mention for the so-called enemy. Next we were enrolled in a perpetual war against what seemed to be the enemy-of-the-month club. This war kept major revenues going to military procurement and secret police, while withholding money from us, the taxpayers, with our petty concerns for life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.

He might have added another petty concern: national solvency.

And still another: military preparedness.

Today, the US has no worthy enemies. Still, it spends \$1 trillion a year — fully loaded — to defend itself against them. The 'terrorists' and 'insurgents' it protects us against have no divisions, no trained officers, no heavy armor, no ships, no aircraft, and no heavy weapons. That is why the news from the front is so boring; the newspapers barely report it. There are no pitched battles. No Napoleonic charges. No breathtaking victories. No Stalingrads. No Gettysburgs. No brilliant strategies. No crushing defeats.

Oh, for another battle of Kursk! It was the greatest land battle in history...a tank battle pitting the Germans' Tigers and Panzers — about 3,000 of them — against the Soviet's T-34s, of which there were about 5,000 in the area. The Germans' tanks had greater range. But the Soviets' tanks were faster...and there were more of them. Wehrmacht forces numbered almost half a million men. For their part, the Soviets had 1.5 million soldiers. The ground was firm. The sky was clear. Both sides fielded experienced, battle-hardened troops.

This was a monster slugfest. Too bad both monsters couldn't lose!

It was a battle on a scale the world never saw before...or since. You already know how it ended. The Soviets had many advantages. First, they had the German's battle plans. They knew where they would strike. So, they built 8 defensive lines...including tank traps and minefields...which slowed the attackers down and wore them out. Second, the Soviets had shorter supply lines. They could rush more troops and equipment to the front much more easily than their enemy. Third, they had a huge superiority in men and machines.

Most important, after the defeat at Stalingrad, the gods of war had gone over to the other side. The momentum of the war had quickly turned against the 1,000-year Reich. Christmas fruitcake would last longer.

Even if the Germans had won the battle of Kursk, they would have gained little. It would have been an empty victory; there was no way to follow up. They lacked the forces to launch another big offensive into the Soviet heartland.

The Germans were on the defensive everywhere. They had already lost North Africa and now they were losing Italy too. A huge invasion of France, though still a year away, was inevitable.

If they had been smarter, they would have renounced their agenda of conquest, taken all their troops back to Germany itself — as fast as possible — begging forgiveness and promising never to set foot beyond the Rhine or the Oder ever again. Maybe there they could put up enough of a fight to force an end to the war without being totally annihilated.

Instead, Hitler had given orders to hold ground everywhere. The Battle of Kursk was intended to give the Germans time. Time to what? Time to lose on a bigger scale!

If only the US had been on the scene; it might have learned something. The US was not involved in that battle. Which is probably a good thing, since its tank crews were inexperienced, and its tanks inferior; US forces probably would have been wiped out, no matter which side they backed.

But now, 70 years later, the US is prepared for the battle. It has 2,300 M1 Abrams tanks in service around the world...and another 3,000 just sitting around in the desert awaiting orders. These tanks are super-big, super-heavy, super sophisticated with super firepower...and super expensive. They can turn an entire building into a pile of rubble from 2 and a half miles away.

On today's battlefields, if you can call them that, the M1 Abrams is in a class of its own. None were knocked out of action in the Iraq war by enemy tanks. The main threat to the M1 turned out to be friendly fire and IEDs — homemade explosives.

Unlike WWII, when the US had the 16th largest army in the world, smaller than Rumania, this time the US is prepared. But preparedness is like everything else under the sun. It soon reaches the point of declining marginal utility. When you reach that level, the more prepared you get the less prepared you are.

That point was probably reached some 110 years ...at least 500 billion dollars... and perhaps 5,000 M1s ago. In the 1890s, Teddy Roosevelt had so much preparedness he used it to wallop 200,000 Filipinos. As for the half a trillion dollars, it's the part of current 'security' spending — *grosso modo* — which has nothing to do with defense and everything to do with giving offense to civilized people all over the globe, which is what got Gore Vidal worked up.

No need to get indignant about it. That's just the way the gods of war amuse themselves. They encourage dim militarists to spend themselves into bankruptcy, preparing for a war the nation will never again fight. Which is why the M1 story is important.

The maker of the M1 Abrams is General Dynamics. When the Pentagon announced that it would like to stop spending money on the M1, the company was justifiably upset. It had spent millions to buy key members of Congress. It expected to get a good return on its investment.

For its part, the Pentagon thought it could save a little money by putting off refurbishment of the tanks for a few years. This would save \$3 billion, admittedly chicken feed, but it would also give it time to redesign the beast for what it imagines might be future combat.

But lobbyists got on the case, apparently timing their campaign donations to correspond with key decision points. Lydia Mulvany reports on what happened next:

After putting the tank money back in the budget then, both the House and Senate Armed Services Committees have authorized it again this year, allotting \$181 million in the House and \$91 million in the Senate. If the company and its supporters prevail, the Army will refurbish what Army chief of staff Ray Odierno described in a February hearing as "280 tanks that we simply do not need.

Mr. Odiero says the M1 is a relic of an earlier age of warfare. It would have been great — maybe — at Kursk. But when the enemy has no tanks, it is merely an expensive — and vulnerable — pile of metal.

Said Mr. Odiero at a February hearing:

We don't believe we'll ever see a straight conventional conflict again in the future.

Which is why the M1 is perfect. At least to the Law of Declining Marginal Utility.

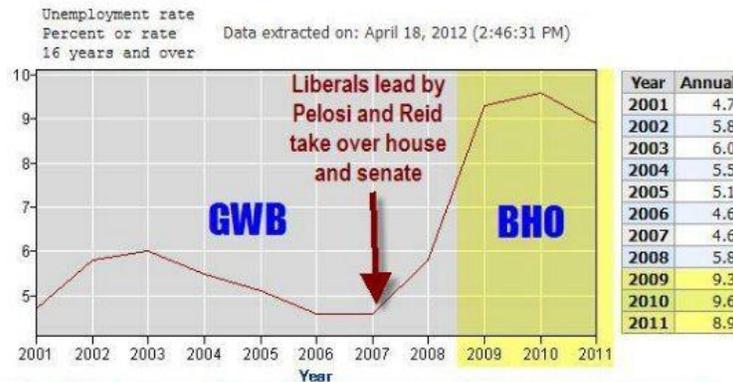
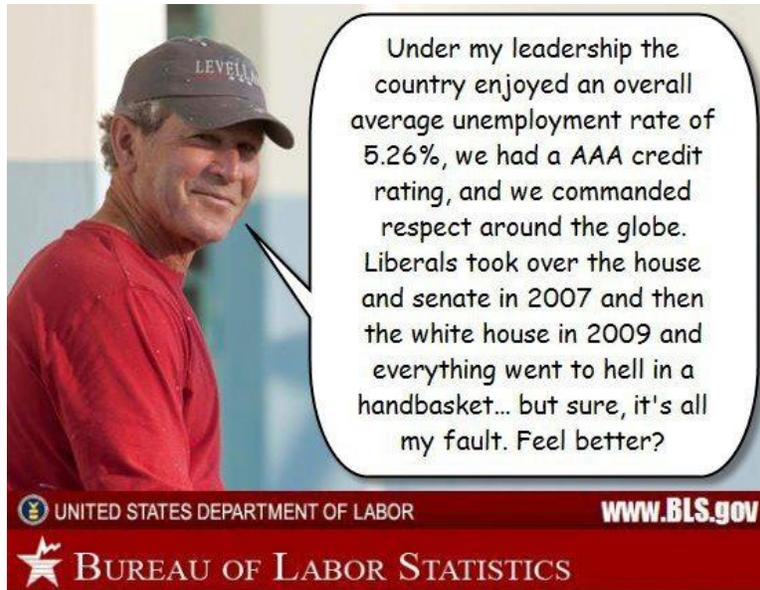
It allows the military industry to spend billions while actually making itself less able to fight the wars of the future.

[20120808-16](#) 18:35 SteveB Re: "Preparing to Fail" (reply to Dennis, above)

Cool article!

[20120808-17](#) 19:08 SteveG Re: "Preparing to Fail" (reply to Dennis, above)

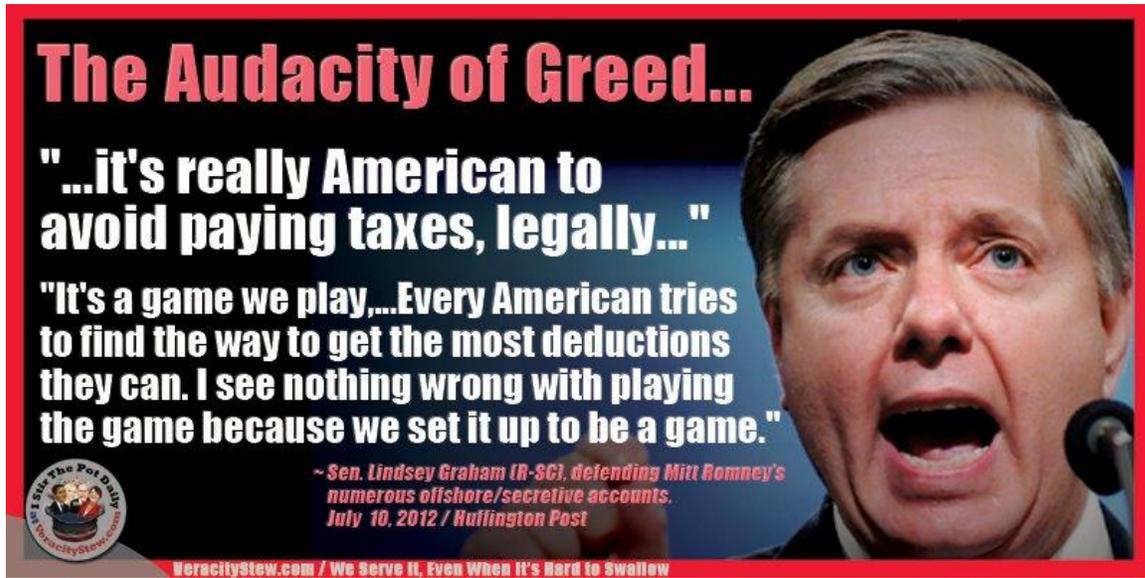
Thanks Dennis, I feel much better now.



Did Obama inherit a mess? Well, let's see...

GWB average overall unemployment **BHO**
5.26% **9.27%**

[Have you ever looked at the pattern of how unemployment statistics look during and after a serious economic crash? I'm sure GWB has. BHO has done wonderfully, despite the constant obstruction of people dedicated to the failure of America. One other point, BHO did NOT take office mid-way through 2008, as shown on your graph, but in Jan., 2009, at a point where **your graph clearly proves that GWB was responsible for nearly all the unemployment—DIRECTLY!** During his watch! But that does not resolve GWB of responsibility for what happened afterwards due to the huge inertia of something as big as the U.S. economy. The dude (GWB) drove us off the cliff! Have you forgotten already? The rest of us have not! —SteveB]



The Audacity of Greed...

"...it's really American to avoid paying taxes, legally..."

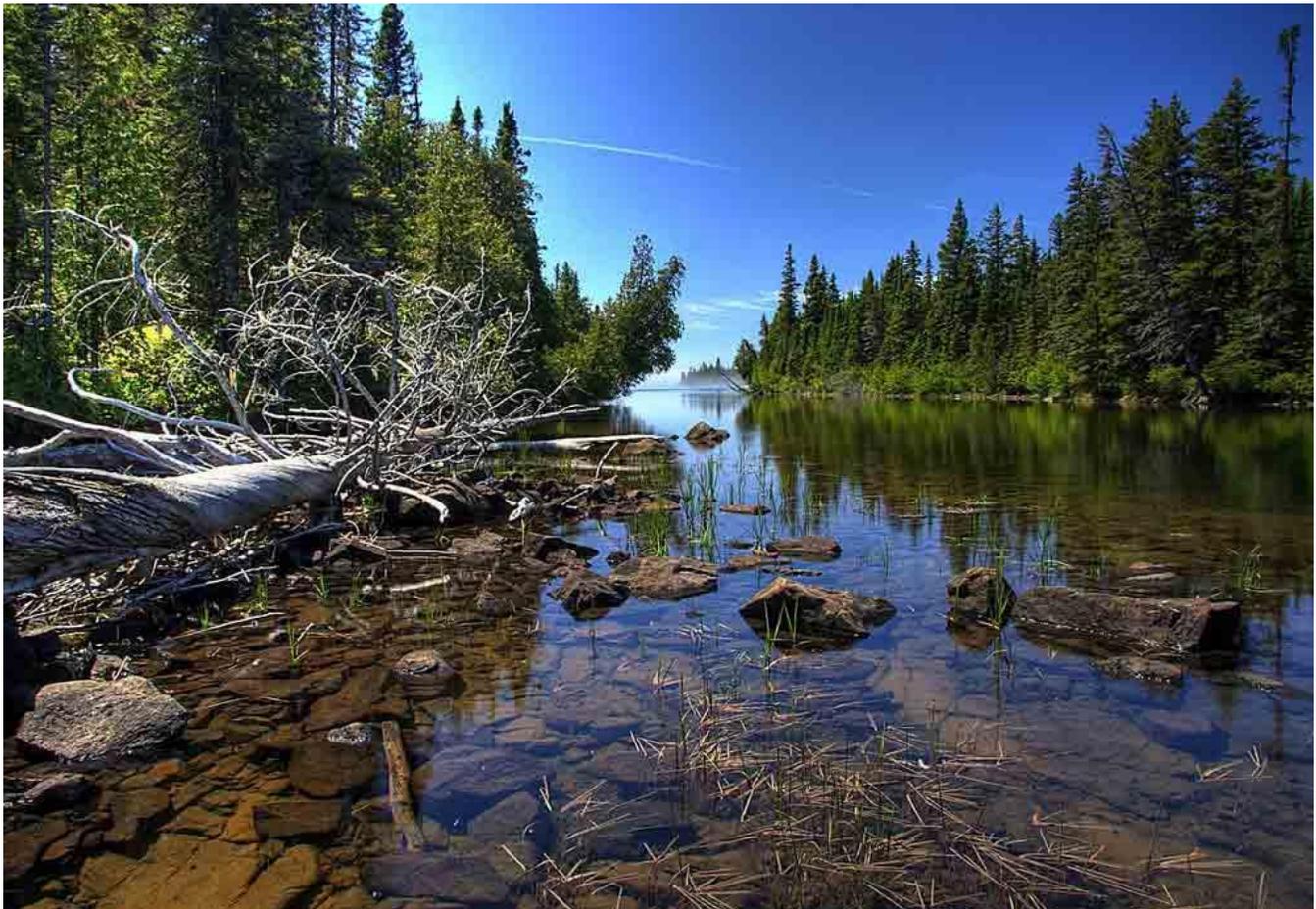
"It's a game we play,...Every American tries to find the way to get the most deductions they can. I see nothing wrong with playing the game because we set it up to be a game."

*~ Sen. Lindsey Graham (R-SC), defending Mitt Romney's numerous offshore/secretive accounts.
July 10, 2012 / Huffington Post*

VeracityStew.com / We Serve It, Even When It's Hard to Swallow

Let's Take The Pot Out Of Politics
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<http://www.guideoftravels.com/isle-royale-national-park.html>



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

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