



FRIENDS OF THE MIDDLE NEWSLETTER #222 — SEPT. 10, 2012

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

INDEX: Click here.

Why the Jobs Aren't

(posted by Steven W. Baker / SteveB, Sept. 10, 2012)

I guess you could say they're in Ryan's pocket (or pocketbook) and he won't let them out. Simply more documentation of the Republican War on Humanity. They seem to feel that, if they can just drive the country over a cliff, maybe they can finally take control and show us how a proper Christian oligarchy is run! Right now, about the only thing standing between us and that is President Obama. The church, the press, the vote have all failed so far to help stop our descent and have, in fact, pushed it along.

"America's Hidden Austerity Program" by Ben Polak and Peter K. Scott, *New York Times*

June 11, 2012, (<http://economix.blogs.nytimes.com/2012/06/11/americas-hidden-austerity-program/>)

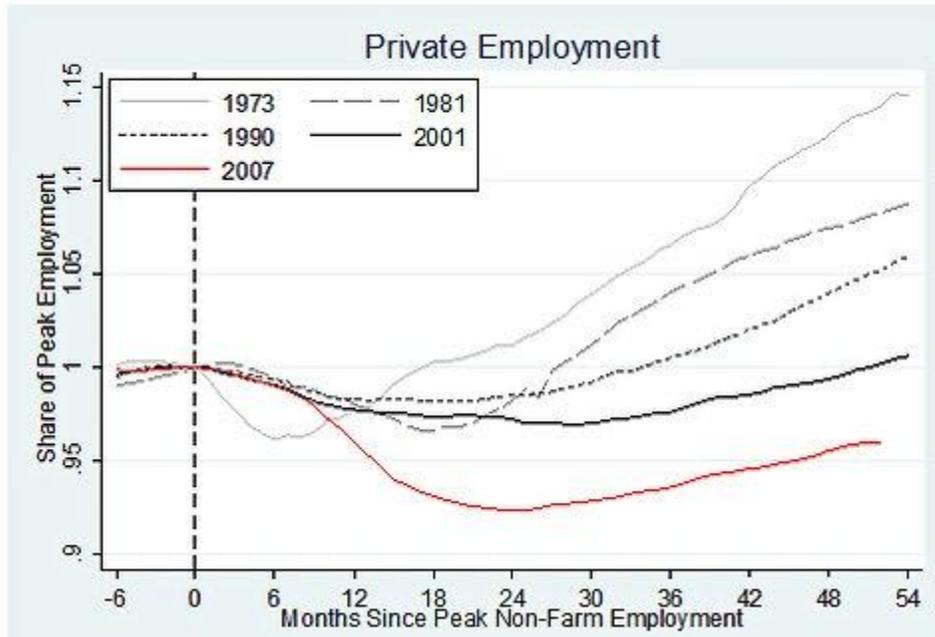


(Ben Polak is the chairman of the economics department at Yale University. Peter K. Schott is a professor of economics at the Yale School of Management.)

Why is the recovery from this recession different from recoveries from past recessions? In the previous two recessions, it took 32 months for nonfarm employment to reattain its June 1990 peak, and 48 months for it to reattain its January 2001 peak. Assuming the economy keeps adding nonfarm employment at the current rate, it

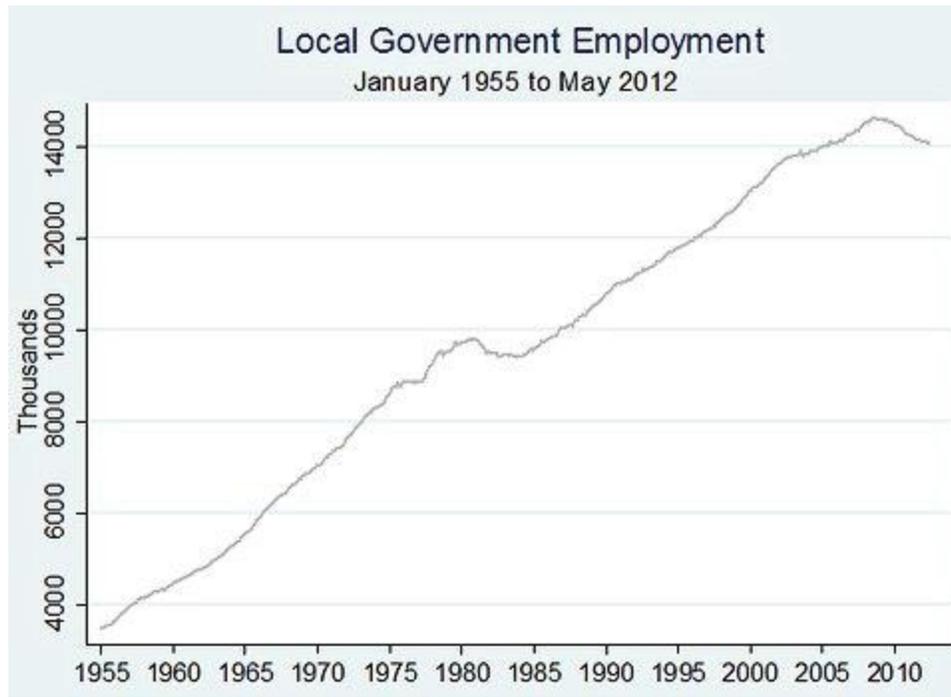
will have taken 88 months to reattain its January 2008 peak. The explanation most often heard is that “financial crises are different”: after a debt crisis, shaken consumers are reluctant to spend and shaken firms are reluctant to hire, slowing private-sector job growth even after the recession has bottomed out.

There is some truth in this, but it is not the whole story. In fact, while the latest recession was particularly deep, the recovery in private-sector employment, once it finally started, has not been particularly slow by recent historical standards. In the 27 months since the start of the current employment recovery, the private sector has added 4.3 million jobs, fewer than the 5.0 million it added in the 27 months after February 1992 but not many fewer than the 4.5 million it added in the equivalent period after August 2003.



Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics

But there is something historically different about this recession and its aftermath: in the past, local government employment has been almost recession-proof. This time it's not. Going back as long as the data have been collected (1955), with the one exception of the 1981 recession, local government employment continued to grow almost every month regardless of what the economy threw at it. But since the latest recession began, local government employment has fallen by 3 percent, and is still falling. In the equivalent period following the 1990 and 2001 recessions, local government employment grew 7.7 and 5.2 percent. Even following the 1981 recession, by this stage local government employment was up by 1.4 percent.

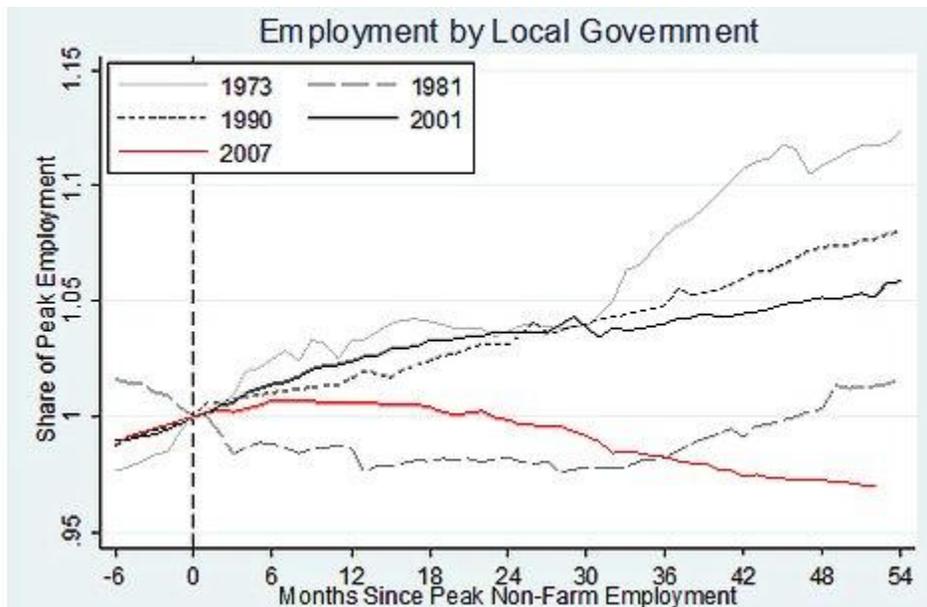


Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics

Who is losing these local government jobs? In 1981 it was mostly teachers. Now, the losses are shared by teachers and other local government workers alike.

State government is much less important than local because it is a much smaller share of total nonfarm employment: 4 percent versus 10 percent. Nevertheless, a similar story can be told there. This far into each recession since 1955, state government employment had grown. Since the start of the latest recession, state government employment is still down 1.2 percent.

Without this hidden austerity program, the economy would look very different. If state and local governments had followed the pattern of the previous two recessions, they would have added 1.4 million to 1.9 million jobs and overall unemployment would be 7.0 to 7.3 percent instead of 8.2 percent.

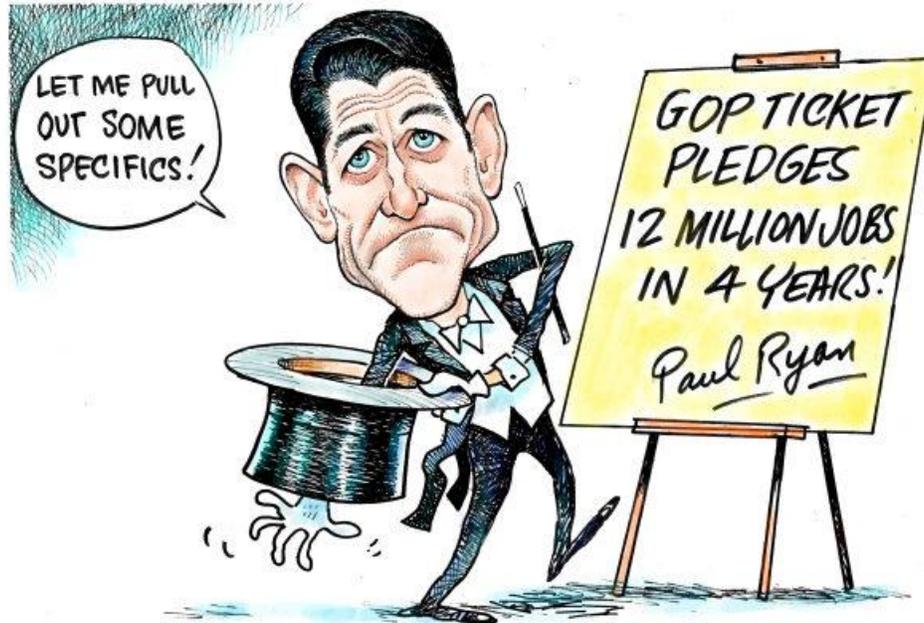


Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics

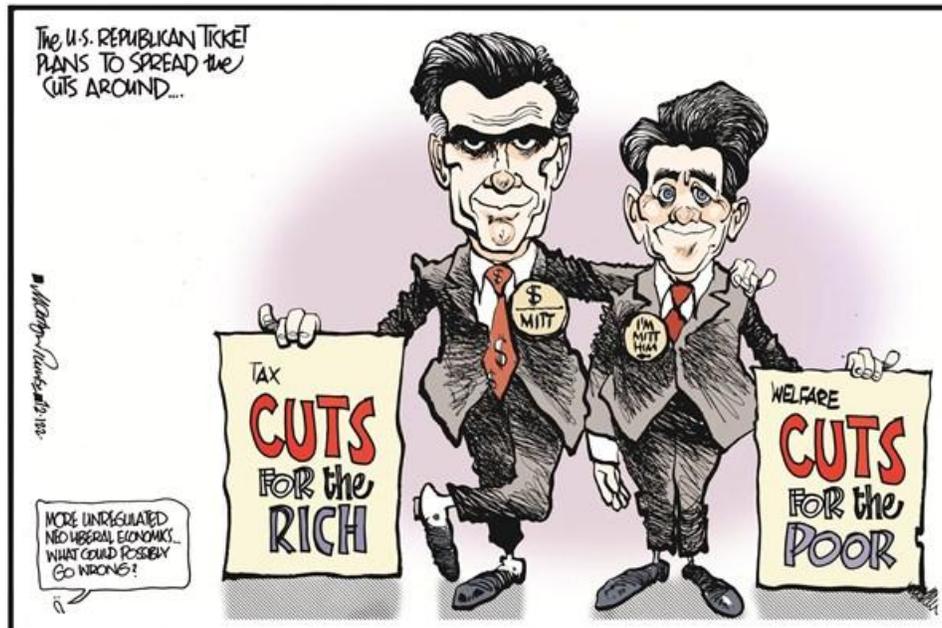
Why is this happening? One possibility is that we are witnessing a secular change in state and local politics, with voters no longer willing to pay for an ever-larger work force. An alternative explanation is that even though many

state and local governments are constrained not to run deficits, they can muddle through a standard recession without cutting jobs. But when hit by a huge recession like that of 1981 or the latest one, the usual mix of creative accounting and shifting in capital expenditures cannot absorb the shock, and jobs have to go.

It has become commonplace to contrast the American and European responses to the Great Recession, with stimulus in the former and austerity in the latter. European austerity has been at the level of member states and local governments — there is no meaningful federal government of Europe to provide either stimulus or austerity. But the United States has also seen unprecedented austerity at the level of state and local governments, and this austerity has slowed the job recovery.



DAVE GRANLUND © www.davegranlund.com



FotM NEWSLETTER #222 (Sept. 10, 2012)—HYPERTEXT INDEX

<u>DATE-ID</u>	<u>TIME</u>	<u>FROM</u>	<u>SUBJECT/TITLE</u>
20120910-00		SteveB	Why the Jobs Aren't by Steven W. Baker / SteveB ("America's Hidden Austerity Program")
20120907-01	10:00	SteveM	"DNC Day Two: So Many Lies, So Much Hate, So Little Time"
20120909-01	06:19	SteveB	Status of the Race (to all Republicans)
20120907-02	10:08	SteveM	Fw: Americans for Prosperity Petition: Tell President Obama to Change His Agenda!
20120907-17	21:19	SandyI & SteveG	Fw: SignOn Petition: Have Fact Checkers at the Debates!
20120907-18	22:42	Art	Re: SignOn Petition: Have Fact Checkers at the Debates!
20120907-03	10:09	SteveM	Fw: Video: Democrats Boo God & Israel
20120907-04	10:18	SteveM	"North Carolina Man Arrested After Tweeting Plans to 'Hit President Obama with That Lee Harvey Oswald Swagg'"
20120907-05	10:42	SteveM	"US Economy Adds 96K Jobs, Rate Falls to 8.1 Pct."
20120907-06	11:03	SteveM	"Fact Check: Obama and Biden at the DNC"
20120908-04	09:22	SteveB	Re: "Fact Check: Obama and Biden at the DNC" (reply to SteveM, above)
20120908-08	13:03	SteveM	Re: "Fact Check: Obama and Biden at the DNC" (reply to SteveB, above) & "No Talk of Auto Bailouts' Ugly Side"
20120908-09	15:10	SteveB	Re: "Fact Check: Obama and Biden at the DNC" (reply to SteveM, above)
20120909-08	21:46	SteveB	Re: "Fact Check: Obama and Biden at the DNC" (reply to SteveM, above)
20120909-09	22:44	SteveM	Re: "Fact Check: Obama and Biden at the DNC" (reply to SteveB, above)
20120909-14	23:35	SteveB	Re: "Fact Check: Obama and Biden at the DNC" (reply to SteveM, above)
20120907-07	11:04	Pam	Re: "What Happens When You Pit a Tea Partier with Stale Talking Points Against Actual Journalists?" & "Transcript: Vice President Joe Biden's DNC Speech" (reply to LarryK, FotM Newsletter #221)
20120907-08	11:21	Ben	Photos: Yesterday's Lunch at Apple
20120907-11	14:17	Ben	Photos: Today's Lunch at Apple
20120907-09	12:11	SteveB	"Paul Ryan Acknowledges Requesting Federal Money from Program Funded by Obamacare"
20120908-06	10:07	SteveB	"Flip Side of Sarah Palin"
20120907-10	14:14	Mark	Re: Video: "David after Dentist" (reply to Pam, FotM Newsletter #221)
20120907-12	17:09	Art	"Finally, the Democrats Learn How to Fight"
20120907-13	20:13	SteveM	Fw: List of Republican Cuts in Ryan's Plan
20120907-15	20:38	SteveB	Re: List of Republican Cuts in Ryan's Plan (reply to SteveM, above)
20120908-01	01:35	SteveM	Re: List of Republican Cuts in Ryan's Plan (reply to SteveB, above)
20120907-14	20:20	SteveM	Video: The Country Is Ruined!
20120907-16	20:59	SteveB	Re: Video: The Country Is Ruined! (reply to SteveM, above)
20120908-02	02:11	SteveM	Re: Video: The Country Is Ruined! (reply to SteveB, above)
20120908-07	10:15	SteveB	Re: Video: The Country Is Ruined! (reply to SteveM, above) & "The Case for Romney' Gets a Little Bit Communist"
20120908-03	06:34	MarthaH	"Can Democrats, Republicans Run the Country While Living in Parallel Worlds?"
20120908-05	09:59	SteveB	"Obama, Clinton Scored Back-to-Back Home Runs with Their Speeches"
20120908-10	16:25	Tom	"FBI Begins Installation of \$1 Billion Face Recognition System Across America"
20120909-02	09:09	SteveB	"Mitt Romney's Skeleton Closet: Scandals, Quotes & Character"
20120909-03	09:28	MarthaH	Cartoon: Henrietta's Solution
20120909-04	11:39	SteveB	"Mitt R0mney on Obamacare: 'I'm Not Getting Rid of All of Health Care Reform'"
20120909-05	12:10	Pam	Re: "Mitt R0mney on Obamacare: 'I'm Not Getting Rid of All of Health Care Reform'" (reply to SteveB, above)
20120909-06	18:15	Ben	Re: "Mitt R0mney on Obamacare: 'I'm Not Getting Rid of All of Health Care Reform'" (reply to SteveB, above)

<u>DATE-ID</u>	<u>TIME</u>	<u>FROM</u>	<u>SUBJECT/TITLE</u>
20120909-07	21:24	SandyI	Quote: Bill Maher on Republicans
20120909-10	22:45	SteveM	Graphic: George W. Bush Saved America But Remains an Unrecognized Hero?
20120909-13	23:30	SteveB	Re: Graphic: George W. Bush Saved America But Remains an Unrecognized Hero? (reply to SteveM, above) & Contrary Graphics
20120909-11	23:00	SteveM	"2016: Obama's America Movie Is Disturbingly Necessary"
20120909-12	23:24	SteveB	Re: "2016: Obama's America Movie Is Disturbingly Necessary" (reply to SteveM, above)
20120909-15	23:59	SteveB	Photo: House of Seven Gables, Salem, MA

20120907-01	10:00	SteveM	"DNC Day Two: So Many Lies, So Much Hate, So Little Time"
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"DNC Day Two: So Many Lies, So Much Hate, So Little Time" by Derek Hunter, *New York Daily News*

Sept. 6, 2012, (http://www.nydailynews.com/blogs/the_rumble/2012/09/dnc-day-two-so-many-lies-so-much-hate-so-little-time)

The second day of the Democratic National Convention has mercifully come to an end for liberals. It was a horrible day on all counts.

It started with the loud boeing of emergency amendments to the party's platform to add a reference to God and Jerusalem as the capital of Israel. When convention chairman and Los Angeles Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa called for a voice vote to pass the amendments, it was abundantly clear they didn't get the two-thirds needed to pass, but Villaraigosa called it so anyway. Then came the boos.

The party was embarrassed, and rightfully so. When your party claims the mantle of tolerance, a crowd booing God and Jews makes for bad optics.

[Continue reading at the New York Daily News...](#)

20120909-01	06:19	SteveB	Status of the Race (to all Republicans)
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Gee, it's not looking too good for your guy, R0mney.

Maybe all that fat-cat money can buy enough negative advertising to completely overwhelm the truth with R0mney-Ryan lies?

Or, maybe the voters are smarter than that?

I know R0mney sure ain't gonna get the votes of the soldiers he was counting on but couldn't even bother to mention in his acceptance speech. CIC in R0mney's future? LOL!

Too big a fool, liar, and flip-flopper to be President, don't you think? Is this the best Republicans could do? Where's Sarah now that you really need her?

20120907-02	10:08	SteveM	Fw: Americans for Prosperity Petition: Tell President Obama to Change His Agenda!
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from Americans for Prosperity:

President Obama just isn't listening.

He's pursued a big-government agenda, and the failures just keep piling up. This failing agenda must come to an end -- click here to join us and sign our petition today.

We've faced a government health care takeover, burdening Americans with over \$500 billion in new taxes. Four straight years of spending trillions of dollars we don't have.

Billions wasted on green energy companies like Solyndra which then went bankrupt.

Over 42 straight months of unemployment above 8 percent.

This failing agenda must come to an end.

Americans for Prosperity is educating Americans on the most harmful aspects of President Obama's big-government agenda, and we're helping put grassroots pressure on President Obama and all politicians to turn away from these destructive policies.

Will you join us?

We need an agenda that will lead America to Prosperity, not one that leads us off a fiscal cliff. Join us as we fight for America's future. Sign the petition today, or register to attend one of our tour stops across the country:

<http://americansforprosperity.org/failingagenda/>.

Go to FailingAgenda.com for more information and to register for an event.

For Prosperity, Tim Phillips, President, Americans for Prosperity

20120907-17	21:19	SandyI & SteveG	Fw: SignOn Petition: Have Fact Checkers at the Debates!
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SandyI: Consider signing this so that fact checkers would be at every debate and "keep 'em honest".

from SignOn.org:

Thank you for your overwhelming support of "Mainstream Media," which is being delivered electronically to the CEOs of the major networks. I hope you will also consider the petition: "Have fact-checkers at the Presidential & VP debates." Our voices can make a difference in the election!

http://www.signon.org/sign/have-fact-checkers-at?source=s.icn.em.cr&r_by=99624&mailing_id=5847

20120907-18	22:42	Art	Re: SignOn Petition: Have Fact Checkers at the Debates!
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Done!

20120907-03	10:09	SteveM	Fw: Video: Democrats Boo God & Israel
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from the Desk of Steve Elliott, Grassfire Nation:

Yesterday at the Democratic National Convention, something quite shocking and disturbing happened. I was so appalled that I feel compelled to share it with you today.

Hours before the prime-time coverage began, Democrats openly voted AGAINST adding a mention of God and support for Israel to their platform.

In fact, they booed God and Israel!

Here's what happened. As you may know, a few days ago we all learned that the Democrats had intentionally stripped references to God and removed recognition of Jerusalem as the capital of Israel from their platform.

But it didn't take long for the intense public backlash to send Democrat leadership on the defensive. Within a day, their backpedaling brought them to the floor of the convention in Charlotte to amend their party platform.

Just one problem ...

When the amendments were put to a floor vote, the delegates clearly rejected the change ... THREE TIMES!

If a picture is worth a thousand words, then the video of Los Angeles Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa's shock at the delegates' clear rejection of the amendments is priceless! He literally did not know what to do until a party hack had to tell him to ignore the delegates and just decree the measure passed.

Just like the Democrats to "deem" something as passed!

That's when the booing started. Go here to watch the video of the vote to include God and recognize Jerusalem in the DNC's platform ... and the booing:

<http://www.grassrootsaction.com/r.asp?U=142064&CID=98&RID=35237119>.

[Much ado about nothing. They were booing the procedure, not God and Israel, though many did oppose adding the references, which does not seem like an unreasonable position given the feeling of our Founding Fathers. – SteveB]

20120907-04	10:18	SteveM	"North Carolina Man Arrested After Tweeting Plans to 'Hit President Obama with That Lee Harvey Oswald Swagg'"
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["North Carolina Man Arrested After Tweeting Plans to 'Hit President Obama with That Lee Harvey Oswald Swagg'" by Neetzan Zimmerman, Gawker](#)

Sept. 3, 2012, (<http://gawker.com/5941188/north-carolina-man-arrested-after-tweeting-plans-to-hit-president-obama-with-that-lee-harvey-oswald-swagg>)

A series of poorly thought-out tweets landed a North Carolina man behind bars after he was picked up by the Secret Service for threatening to assassinate the president.

"Ima hit president Obama with that Lee Harvey Oswald swagg," tweeted 21-year-old Donte Jamar Sims on Monday, one day before the Democratic National Convention was set to open near his home in Charlotte.

[Continue reading at Gawker...](#)

20120907-05	10:42	SteveM	"US Economy Adds 96K Jobs, Rate Falls to 8.1 Pct."
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["US Economy Adds 96K Jobs, Rate Falls to 8.1 Pct." by Christopher S. Rugaber, AP](#)

Sept. 7, 2012, (http://hosted2.ap.org/APDEFAULT/3d281c11a96b4ad082fe88aa0db04305/Article_2012-09-07-Economy/id-58cecddec688f49449653e2b62b2d10ac)

(WASHINGTON) U.S. employers added 96,000 jobs last month, a weak figure that could slow the momentum President Barack Obama hoped to gain from his speech Thursday night to the Democratic National Convention.

The unemployment rate fell to 8.1 percent from 8.3 percent in July. But that was only because more people gave up looking for jobs. People who are out of work are counted as unemployed only if they're looking for a job.

The government also said Friday that 41,000 fewer jobs were created in July and June than first estimated. The economy has added just 139,000 jobs a month since the start of the year, below 2011's average of 153,000.

Cash-short governments were a key reason the job market was weaker in June and July than first estimated. Federal, state and local governments cut 39,000 jobs in those months — above the earlier estimate of 18,000. In previous recoveries, governments have typically added jobs, not shed them.

Friday's report was discouraging throughout. Hourly pay fell, manufacturers cut the most jobs in two years and the number of people in the work force dropped to its lowest level in 31 years.

Stocks ticked in the first hour of trading, as investors anticipate the Federal Reserve will unveil a new bond-buying program at its meeting next week to try to lift the economy. The goal of the bond purchases would be to lower long-term interest rates to encourage borrowing and spending.

"This weak jobs report is going to feed into (the Fed's) argument that the economy is growing at a sub-par pace," said John Silvia, chief economist at Wells Fargo.

The report provided fodder for both presidential candidates. Soon after the report was issued, Republican nominee Mitt Romney pointed to 43 straight months in which unemployment has now exceeded 8 percent.

"President Obama just hasn't lived up to his promises, and his policies haven't worked," Romney said in a statement.

At the same time, August marked the 30th straight month of private-sector job gains, a point Obama and his allies are certain to spotlight.

Friday's jobs report is among the most politically consequential of the campaign. It arrives as the presidential race enters the final two months before Election Day. Jobs are the core issue, and the report could sway some undecided voters.

There will be two additional employment reports before the election. But by then, more Americans will have made up their minds.

In his speech Thursday night, Obama acknowledged incomplete progress in repairing the still-struggling economy and asked voters to remain patient.

"The truth is, it will take more than a few years for us to solve challenges that have built up over the decades," Obama said.

Jim O'Sullivan, chief U.S. economist at High Frequency Economics, noted that hiring has improved slightly in the past two months. Job gains averaged 119,000 in July and August, up from an average monthly gain of 67,000 in the April-June quarter.

"There's no sign of momentum fading," he said. "That said, it's not much better. ... What you're left with is an economy that's still growing, but pretty modestly."

In addition to those who've given up looking for work, many young Americans are avoiding the job market by remaining in school. All told, the proportion of the adult population that's either working or looking for work fell to 63.5 percent.

That's the lowest level in 31 years for the so-called labor force participation rate. The rate peaked at 67.3 percent in early 2000.

Paul Ashworth, chief U.S. economist at Capital Economics, says labor force participation is on a long-term slide.

"You've got the aging of the baby boom generation," Ashworth notes. "That has been greatly compounded by the effects of the recession and the slow recovery. People are just losing patience" and dropping out of the labor force.

In two or three years, though, Ashworth expects a stronger economy will encourage more Americans to seek work and will push the participation rate up. But the higher participation rates won't last once baby boomer retirements pick up, causing more people to leave the work force, he predicts.

At its meeting on Wednesday and Thursday, the Fed is expected to consider a range of options to try to help the economy. Besides bond buying, the Fed is also considering whether to extend the timetable for any increase in record-low short-term interest rates. The Fed's current plan is to maintain record-low rates until at least late 2014. Anthony Chan, chief economist at Chase Wealth Management, says further Fed action would likely send stock prices up, making consumers feel wealthier and more willing to spend.

Average hourly wages dipped a penny in August to \$23.52 and are only slightly ahead of inflation in the past year.

The average work week was unchanged in August after being revised downward in July to 34.4 hours. And the number of temporary jobs fell for the first time in five months. Both figures suggest that companies are seeing less demand for their services and need fewer workers.

Many of the jobs were in lower-paying industries such as retail, which added 6,100 jobs, and hotels, restaurants and other leisure industries, which gained 34,000. Higher-paying manufacturing jobs fell by 15,000, the most in two years.

The manufacturing losses might have been skewed by seasonal distortions. More than half the job losses were in the auto industry. Fewer automakers shut down plants this summer to capitalize on greater demand for cars and trucks. As a result, fewer workers were temporarily laid off in July, and so fewer were called back to work in August. The weak pace of hiring is the latest sign that businesses are reluctant to make big investments or add more workers. Europe's financial crisis has pushed the region's economy to the edge of recession. And a set of tax hikes and spending cuts scheduled to take effect at the beginning of the year have created uncertainty about future growth.

No president since Franklin D. Roosevelt during the Great Depression has been re-elected with a jobless rate over 8 percent. This year's election will likely turn on whether voters see the economy as improving or remaining stagnant or getting worse under Obama.

20120907-06	11:03	SteveM	"Fact Check: Obama and Biden at the DNC"
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"Fact Check: Obama and Biden at the DNC" bby Lori Robertson, Brooks Jackson, Eugene Kiely, Robert Farley and Ben Finley, FactCheck.org/USA Today

Sept. 7, 2012, (<http://www.usatoday.com/news/politics/story/2012-09-07/fact-check-obama-biden-dnc/57672532/1>)

(CHARLOTTE, NC) In a rousing double-header, Democratic delegates heard Barack Obama and Joe Biden both accept renomination on their convention's final night. And we heard some facts being spun.

- President Obama boasted that his plan would cut the deficit by \$4 trillion over 10 years, citing "independent experts." But one such analyst called a key element of the plan a "gimmick."

- Vice President Biden quoted GOP presidential nominee Mitt Romney as saying "it's not worth moving heaven and earth" to catch Osama bin Laden. Actually, Romney said he'd target more than just "one person."
- The president said U.S. automakers are "back on top of the world." Nope. GM has slipped back to No. 2 and is headed for third place in global sales this year, behind Toyota and Volkswagen.
- Biden said "the experts" concluded Romney's corporate tax plan would create 800,000 jobs in other countries. One expert said that. She also said the number depends on the details, and foreign jobs could grow without costing U.S. jobs.
- Obama quoted Romney as saying it was "tragic" to "end the war in Iraq." What Romney was criticizing was the pace of Obama's troop withdrawal, not ending a war.
- Biden claimed Romney "believes it's OK to raise taxes on middle classes by \$2,000." Romney actually promises to lower middle-class taxes.
- Biden said Romney and running mate Paul Ryan "are not for preserving Medicare at all." Actually, the plan they endorse would offer traditional Medicare as one option among many.
- Obama said his tax plan would restore "the same rate we had when Bill Clinton was president" for upper-income taxpayers. Not quite. New taxes to finance the health care law also kick in next year, further burdening those same taxpayers.

Obama exaggerated when he claimed "independent experts" say his deficit-reduction plan would reduce the federal deficit by \$4 trillion over 10 years. Actually, one independent analysis criticized a central part of the president's plan as a "gimmick."

In September of last year, Obama released "The President's Plan for Economic Growth and Deficit Reduction." The plan purports to generate \$4 trillion in deficit reduction over 10 years — including "more than \$1 trillion in savings over the next 10 years from our drawdowns in Afghanistan and Iraq."

In February, when Obama released his fiscal year 2013 budget, the Committee for a Responsible Federal Budget criticized the president's plan for relying on savings from winding down the two wars. Maya MacGuineas, president of the bipartisan group, called it a "gimmick."

"There are a number of good policies in this budget, but the use of this war gimmick is quite troubling," said MacGuineas. "Drawing down spending on wars that were already set to wind down and that were deficit financed in the first place should not be considered savings. When you finish college, you don't suddenly have thousands of dollars a year to spend elsewhere — in fact, you have to find a way to pay back your loans."

In addition, the president's plan includes another \$1 trillion in savings from the Budget Control Act that had been agreed to as part of the deal with Congress to raise the debt ceiling. That's not new savings, but accounts for already agreed-upon savings.

Biden's bin Laden baloney

Biden repeated the Obama campaign's claim — previously made in a Web ad— that Romney said that "it's not worth moving heaven and earth, and spending billions of dollars" to catch Osama bin Laden.

The claim, which Republicans disputed, fails to include the rest of Romney's quote from an Associated Press story. Romney said the country's focus should not be on one person, but it should be a "broader strategy to defeat the Islamic jihad movement."

Biden: Folks, Governor Romney didn't see things that way. When he was asked about bin Laden in 2007, here's what he said. He said, "It's not worth moving heaven and earth and spending billions of dollars just to catch one person."

Romney's quote comes from an interview with the AP in April 2007 — when bin Laden was still alive.

AP: [Romney] said the country would be safer by only "a small percentage" and would see "a very insignificant increase in safety" if al-Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden was caught because another terrorist would rise to power. "It's not worth moving heaven and earth spending billions of dollars just trying to catch one person," Romney said. Instead, he said he supports a broader strategy to defeat the Islamic jihad movement.

A transcript of Romney's 2007 interview, which the conservative website Townhall obtained from the Romney campaign, offers more context:

[AP reporter] Liz Sidoti: Why haven't we caught bin Laden in your opinion?

Romney: I think, I wouldn't want to over-concentrate on Bin Laden. He's one of many, many people who are involved in this global Jihadist effort.

He's by no means the only leader. It's a very diverse group - Hamas, Hezbollah, al-Qaeda, Muslim Brotherhood and of course different names throughout the world.

It's not worth moving heaven and earth and spending billions of dollars just trying to catch one person. It is worth fashioning and executing an effective strategy to defeat global, violent Jihad and I have a plan for doing that.

Not quite 'on top'

The president overstated the strength of the U.S. automotive industry when he said that "we reinvented a dying auto industry that's back on top of the world." Not quite. General Motors has currently slipped back to No. 2 in world auto sales, based on sales for the first six months of the year, and Volkswagen is expected to push GM into third place for the full year.

GM has indeed made a comeback: It took back the top spot in global sales in 2011 after being surpassed by Toyota in 2008. Prior to that, GM had been No. 1 for more than 70 years. But for the first six months of 2012, Toyota, with 4.97 million vehicle sales, regained the lead from GM, with 4.67 million sales, for first place in worldwide auto sales. GM is expected to drop to third for all of 2012.

A disputed jobs figure

Biden used a disputed figure to attack Romney's proposal to overhaul the taxation of multinational corporations:

Biden: It's called a territorial tax, which the experts have looked at, and they acknowledge it will create 800,000 new jobs — all of them overseas, all of them.

It's true that one expert — Kimberly Clausing, a professor of economics at Reed College in Portland, Oregon — recently published a study calculating that a "pure" territorial system of international taxation would increase employment in low-tax countries by about 800,000 jobs. But that's not necessarily what Romney is proposing. The foreign job growth could be smaller, wouldn't necessarily come at the expense of U.S. workers, and doesn't take account of any offsetting job gains in the U.S.

Romney has proposed switching taxation of U.S.-based multinational corporations to a territorial system — in which earnings are taxed only in the countries where they are generated — similar to the system used by most other industrial nations. But Romney has not specified details, so we don't know if his would be a "pure" territorial system or not. Clausing herself said in a recent interview that the actual effect "depends on the details of the territorial system that is adopted."

She notes in her study that "jobs abroad need not displace jobs at home" — that is, provided that the present economy improves, and U.S. unemployment drops to a low level. So depending on the economic circumstances, creating jobs overseas doesn't necessarily mean losing jobs in the U.S., as Biden's listeners might have assumed.

Furthermore, a critique of Clausing's figure by the Tax Foundation (a group supported in part by corporate donations) says that she based it on current corporate tax rates — not on the lower 25% rate that Romney proposes. The lower rate, it is argued, would attract foreign investment and lead to importing jobs.

We won't attempt to resolve here the merits or demerits of Romney's embryonic corporate tax plan. The fact is that Biden quoted one study from one expert, but "experts" in general disagree.

Twisting a 'tragic' quote

Making the case that Romney lacks foreign policy chops, Obama twisted Romney's words, claiming, "My opponent said it was 'tragic' to end the war in Iraq."

But that's not quite what Romney said. He was speaking of the speed with which Obama was withdrawing troops, not to ending the war in general.

During a veterans roundtable in South Carolina on Nov. 11, 2011, Romney criticized Obama's plan to remove troops from Iraq by the end of that year. Here's the fuller context of his comments, as reported by the *New York Times*:

Romney, Nov. 11, 2011: It is my view that the withdrawal of all of our troops from Iraq by the end of this year is an enormous mistake, and failing by the Obama administration. The precipitous withdrawal is unfortunate — it's more than unfortunate, I think it's tragic. It puts at risk many of the victories that were hard won by the men and women who served there.

A month earlier, when Obama formally announced the withdrawal of tens of thousands of troops from Iraq by year's end, Romney released a similar statement:

Romney, Oct. 21, 2011: President Obama's astonishing failure to secure an orderly transition in Iraq has unnecessarily put at risk the victories that were won through the blood and sacrifice of thousands of American men and women. The unavoidable question is whether this decision is the result of a naked political calculation or simply sheer ineptitude in negotiations with the Iraqi government. The American people deserve to hear the recommendations that were made by our military commanders in Iraq.

In December, Romney argued that Obama "has pulled our troops out in a precipitous way" and that he ought to have left a residual force of "10-, 20-, 30-thousand personnel there to help transition to the Iraqi's own military capabilities."

Criticizing the "precipitous" pace of withdrawal and the president's failure to leave a residual force in Iraq is a far cry from calling the end of the war in Iraq "tragic."

Middle-class taxes

Biden joined the chorus of off-key convention speakers who have attacked Romney for wanting to raise taxes on the middle class, even though Romney says he won't do that.

Biden: Folks, Governor Romney believes it's OK to raise taxes on middle classes by \$2,000 in order to pay for ... another trillion-dollar tax cut for the very wealthy.

That's exactly the opposite of what Romney actually says. In his speech accepting the presidential nomination at the Republican National Convention, he said:

Romney, Aug. 30: I will not raise taxes on the middle class.

Biden refers to an analysis by the Tax Policy Center of a plan that, as Romney also promises, cuts income tax rates across the board by 20% and pays for it by eliminating and reducing tax deductions and credits. TPC found that such a plan would "increase the tax burdens on middle- and/or lower-income taxpayers." Under one scenario, it said that "taxpayers with children who make less than \$200,000 would pay, on average, \$2,000 more in taxes."

But that's not evidence that Romney wants to increase taxes on the middle class. It only proves Romney "can't accomplish all his stated objectives," according to the Tax Policy Center's director, Donald Marron.

Biden distorts Romney's Medicare plan

Biden took aim at Romney's Medicare plan, saying it would "immediately cut benefits for more than 30 million seniors" and "cause Medicare to go bankrupt by 2016." In fact, he said, "They're not for preserving Medicare at all." All of those claims are misleading.

Biden: You heard them talk so much about how they cared so much about Medicare, how much they wanted to preserve it. That's what they told you.

But let's look at what they didn't tell you. What they didn't tell you is that the plan they have already put down on paper would immediately cut benefits for more than 30 million seniors already on Medicare. What they didn't tell you — what they didn't tell you is the plan they're proposing would cause Medicare to go bankrupt by 2016. And what they really didn't tell you is they — if you want to know — if you want to know — they're not for preserving Medicare at all. They're for a new plan. It's called "Vouchercare."

Let's unpack these claims one by one. When Biden says the Romney plan "would immediately cut benefits for more than 30 million seniors already on Medicare," he's referring to Romney's promise to dismantle the Affordable Care Act. As part of the health care law, seniors on Medicare are entitled to free annual preventive care and increased prescription drug coverage. But Romney has not advocated cutting any of the traditional benefits provided by Medicare.

And as we wrote Sept. 6 after former president Bill Clinton made a similar claim, the Romney plan will not "cause Medicare to go bankrupt by 2016." But a part of Medicare — the hospital insurance trust fund — would not be able to pay full benefits for hospital services if the growth in Medicare spending is not cut, as the health care law prescribes. Physician and prescription drug benefits, financed separately out of general tax revenues and premiums, wouldn't be affected.

As we explained in our Aug. 22 article, "A Campaign Full of Mediscare," the Medicare hospital trust fund is on pace to be exhausted by 2024 — or by 2016 if the Affordable Care Act is repealed. But trustees estimate Medicare would still collect enough payroll taxes to fund 87% of the cost of hospital bills that would come due. The funding gap would continue to grow, and by 2050 the fund could cover only 67% of its bills. But that doesn't mean Medicare would be "bankrupt" and would suddenly halt all payments. And if it wished, the government could make up the shortfall with tax dollars.

Biden's claim that "they're not for preserving Medicare at all," is also misleading. Under the Romney/Ryan plan, those 55 and older would remain in traditional Medicare. For those currently under 55, the Romney-Ryan plan would institute a new premium-support plan beginning with new beneficiaries in 2023. Seniors would pick from private plans, or could choose traditional Medicare, all of which would be offered on a new Medicare exchange. So, those 55 and over would still get Medicare, and those under 55 could opt for traditional Medicare.

Not the same as Clinton

Obama said he proposed a return to the same tax rate on upper-income households that prevailed during the booming economy of the 1990s. But that's not quite accurate.

Obama: I want to reform the tax code so that it's simple, fair, and asks the wealthiest households to pay higher taxes on incomes over \$250,000 - the same rate we had when Bill Clinton was president; the same rate we had when our economy created nearly 23 million new jobs.

Obama refers to his wish to allow the Bush tax cuts to expire for families with over \$250,000 annual income, or for individuals with over \$200,000. The top marginal income tax rate would return to 39.6%, where it was set by Clinton's 1993 tax increase, up from 35%, where it has been since 2003.

But that's not the whole story. Obama has signed some new taxes to help finance the Affordable Care Act, increasing the burden on those upper-income taxpayers. Starting Jan. 1 next year, they will pay an additional 0.9% of wages for Medicare payroll taxes. And they will also be subject to a 3.8% tax on investment income from such things as stocks, bonds and sale of real estate. Those are taxes that didn't exist when Clinton was president. If Obama succeeds in raising the top income tax rates to Clinton-era levels, total taxes on those making over \$250,000 family income are thus likely to be higher than they were under Clinton. (They'll still benefit from the Bush cuts on their income below \$250,000, because Obama wouldn't restore those lower-bracket rates to Clinton levels. So some upper-income taxpayers could still end up paying less federal tax than they paid under Clinton, depending.)

20120908-04	09:22	SteveB	Re: "Fact Check: Obama and Biden at the DNC" (reply to SteveM, above)
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Tell you what, I'm going to arbitrarily pick one of these and prove that it's a lie. If there is one lie, the author is a liar and not to be believed on any point. Fair?

How about #2?

Read this (May 1, 2012) (<http://blogs.telegraph.co.uk/news/timstanley/100154555/obamas-tacky-i-shot-bin-laden-ad-has-turned-a-military-triumph-into-a-political-disaster/>):

"Why haven't we caught bin Laden in your opinion?" Mitt replied, "I think, I wouldn't want to over-concentrate on bin Laden. He's one of many, many people who are involved in this global Jihadist effort. He's by no means the only leader. It's a very diverse group – Hamas, Hezbollah, al-Qaeda, Muslim Brotherhood and of course different names throughout the world. *It's not worth moving heaven and earth and spending billions of dollars just trying to catch one person...* Global Jihad is not an effort that is being populated by a handful or even a football stadium full of people. It is – it involves millions of people and is going to require a far more comprehensive strategy than a targeted approach for bin laden or a few of his associates."

And if R0mney didn't really say that (though I believe he did), then is Biden's quote really a lie, such as spews from Lyin' Ryan's mouth with every word? I don't think so. It also makes a liar of your article's writers!

That's how the lies go.

Look at #3. Merely a matter of opinion. Compared to where GM was and where it could be, it is conceivable to think of it as being "back on top of the world" especially since they have had periods recently of being #1 in sales. To say they've slipped to #2 only tells a very convenient part of the story, wouldn't you agree?

That's how this drivel works. Awful, foul cr*p! Even you can't find an end to pick this sh*t up by. :-)

20120908-08	13:03	SteveM	Re: "Fact Check: Obama and Biden at the DNC" (reply to SteveB, above) & "No Talk of Auto Bailouts' Ugly Side"
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Wrong, and BTW *USA Today* is left of center.

"No Talk of Auto Bailouts' Ugly Side" by Daniel Howes, *Detroit News*

Sept. 6, 2012, (<http://www.detroitnews.com/article/20120906/OPINION03/209060345/1148/auto01/No-talk-auto-bailouts-ugly-side>)

(Dems cite success at convention without hint of cost, losers.)

Detroit's auto bailout is doing a star turn at this week's Democratic National Convention, a nut-and-bolts reminder that one of Barack Obama's first tough calls as president proved to be more right than wrong.

General Motors Co., despite well-publicized troubles in Europe and a sagging share price, is solidly profitable in its bellwether North American market with 10 straight quarters in the black. Chrysler Group LLC, effectively a unit of Fiat SpA of Italy, continues to outperform sales expectations and now accounts for nearly all the profits in the transatlantic group.

As if on cue for the stretch-run to the November election, sales of cars and trucks last month reached their highest point in four years thanks to low interest rates, aggressive incentive programs and an aggregate age of vehicles in the United States now approaching 11 years old. Looking for a definition of pent-up demand? This is about as close as it gets.

End of story, right? Wrong.

For as much as Democrats, United Auto Workers President Bob King and President Obama himself hail the auto bailout as a political winner with voters and Exhibit No. 1 in the vindication of the president's decision-making prowess, the auto bailouts also produced a trail of uglies and strong-arm tactics you won't hear about at the convention in Charlotte.

In moving to get Chrysler through bankruptcy and into the hands of Fiat CEO Sergio Marchionne, the president's auto task force bullied Chrysler bondholders and managed successfully to place the unsecured claims of the UAW ahead of secured creditors.

In moving to get GM back to independence, the Treasury Department sold part of its equity stake in the automaker at an initial public offering. But the shares now trade consistently lower than their offer price, meaning taxpayers stand to lose as much as \$15 billion on the government's remaining 26.5-percent stake in GM, according to Treasury estimates.

In moving to get GM through bankruptcy, the task force and its bosses at Treasury effectively shafted 22,000 salaried retirees of the former Delphi Corp., the long-time GM parts supplier the automaker spun off in 1999. Despite an 85 percent funding level in its pension fund, Treasury urged the Pension Benefit Guaranty Corp. to seize the Delphi pension plan.

The net effect: Many retirees saw their annual payouts cut by as much as two thirds, even as union members were "topped up" with taxpayer dollars from the Troubled Asset Relief Program; their former colleagues at GM saw comparatively minor cuts to their pensions; and key members of the auto task force still won't tell congressional investigators who made the call to treat Delphi's salaried retirees differently than everyone else.

In moving to get both GM and Chrysler through bankruptcy, the task force essentially ordered the automakers to cut thousands of independent dealers from their distribution networks, irrespective of the dealers' profitability, customer service performance and even location.

The bottom line: The president's call to rescue Detroit from itself — a call his predecessor George W. Bush made first and said he would do again — succeeded more than his Republican rival, Gov. Mitt Romney, and his proxies may be willing to admit. But it wasn't always pretty, and that success came at a price, roughly \$85 billion, that some continue to argue was not worth paying.

In theory, maybe. In the context of presidential politics, not a chance. No sitting president, Republican or Democrat, could risk the economic cataclysm in the industrial Midwest of a collapse of the domestic automakers and much of

their supply base. Too many jobs, too much wealth, too much political support and too many communities are at stake.

Romney even admitted as much in the days running up to Michigan primary last February, notwithstanding his November 2008 op-ed in the New York Times headlined "Let Detroit go Bankrupt." He conceded, in questioning by The Detroit News, that he would not as president allow the Detroit automakers and their suppliers to collapse amid the kind of global financial meltdown the nation faced in late 2008 and early '09.

He's right, as Obama was in the early days of his presidency. Nearly four years on, the prescriptions issued by Obama and Romney, each in its own way, occurred: both companies have new management and reconstituted boards of directors; both companies have more competitive labor agreements and stronger balance sheets; both companies are making in-roads in the small car segment where Detroit has long struggled.

GM and Chrysler are stronger, better led and more likely to survive because each possessed assets worth saving — and because their leaders and the tens of thousands who work for them did the hard work to finish the job.

20120908-09	15:10	SteveB	Re: "Fact Check: Obama and Biden at the DNC" (reply to SteveM, above)
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The writer of the article was right-wing, not that it should matter. *USA Today* is hardly left of center.

The facts I checked were simply wrong or not facts.

USA Today is lying or in error about what Biden says and I think that's a big deal. I proved it. Unequivocally.

Biden: Truth. *USA Today*: Lie. (in this case)

But you can't admit that? You didn't read my proof? How could I be "wrong". Biden did not make-up the quote. Period. And all you can do in response to this astounding revelation is change the subject?

20120909-08	21:46	SteveB	Re: "Fact Check: Obama and Biden at the DNC" (reply to SteveM, above)
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Actually this article is chock full of lies! The truth should be respected and honored.

Here's what Romney actually said concerning the fifth point in your article (the President is right!):

"The precipitous withdrawal is unfortunate. It's more than unfortunate. **I think it's tragic.** It puts at risk many of the victories that were hard-won by the men and women who have served there. I hope the risk is not realized. I hope instead that the Iraqis are able to pick up the baton, and despite the fact that we will have walked away on a too-rapid basis." (<http://www.politifact.com/florida/statements/2012/sep/07/barack-obama/obama-says-romney-said-it-was-tragic-end-war-iraq/>)

"The truth will out!"

20120909-09	22:44	SteveM	Re: "Fact Check: Obama and Biden at the DNC" (reply to SteveB, above)
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I don't think so, but you're welcome to contact the author(s) and the paper(s) and challenge them. In the mean time, enjoy.

20120909-14	23:35	SteveB	Re: "Fact Check: Obama and Biden at the DNC" (reply to SteveM, above)
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What do you mean you "don't think so"?

I PROVED IT!

If you reject truth and facts...what does that leave you with?

You want to know? NOTHING!

Now, that's the truth!

[20120907-07](#)

11:04

Pam

Re: "What Happens When You Pit a Tea Partier with Stale Talking Points Against Actual Journalists?" & "Transcript: Vice President Joe Biden's DNC Speech" (reply to LarryK, FotM Newsletter #221)

I just read Joe Biden's speech, and there is nothing wrong with it. It's a good speech, a convincing speech. Were Americans so naive as to think a single president, one man, could undo a train wreck overnight, and in terms of the economy two and a half years is overnight. You don't change horses in the middle of the stream, and you don't return to the same place you started from if you want to get anywhere. I believe that Obama is motivated by genuine concern for the American people and the security of the world. None of us can begin to imagine how difficult his job is. A man has to want that job for more than personal aggrandizement; the aggravation that come with it just wouldn't be worth it. Why does Romney want to be president? From everything I've heard him say, I'd say it's because he wants to make daddy proud by doing what his father failed to do. I'd say it's because he's been so successful at making money that he thinks he can do anything and has no idea of what deep waters he may be getting into. I'd say it's because he's clueless: consider his off-the-cuff remarks during his European tour. I'd say it's because he's used to being a patriarch in his church and in his family, and he believes he can be a patriarch to the country.

Joe Biden has so much more insight into the realities than Paul Ryan it isn't even funny. He has been up close and personal with a president who has accomplished so much more than he's given credit for. The best Romney and Ryan can do is attack Obama, again and again, while fudging the truth (to be generous) and avoiding specific arguments. As the old lawyer once said, When the facts are against you, pound the table. Too many people hear the pounding and mistake it for eloquence. If they listen to it too closely, the next sound they hear will be the economy crashing again and the American foundations crumbling into the earth.

I would also say that the crack about Ted Kennedy is a cheap shot. What happened was tragic. Does anyone really believe that it ever went out of his mind for a single day? I know a young man, now a teacher with a family, who, when he was in college, got drunk, got behind the wheel of a car, and caused an accident that killed another student. He went to jail. His parents were devastated. He was devastated. He's a good person with a heavy load of guilt to carry and he'll never be able to put it down. Everyone sympathizes with the victim, as they should. But they should also recognize that living with guilt for the rest of a lifetime is the worst punishment. The loss can't be undone, and the guilt never ends, and life is not fair. That's why we have something called "mercy."

[20120907-08](#)

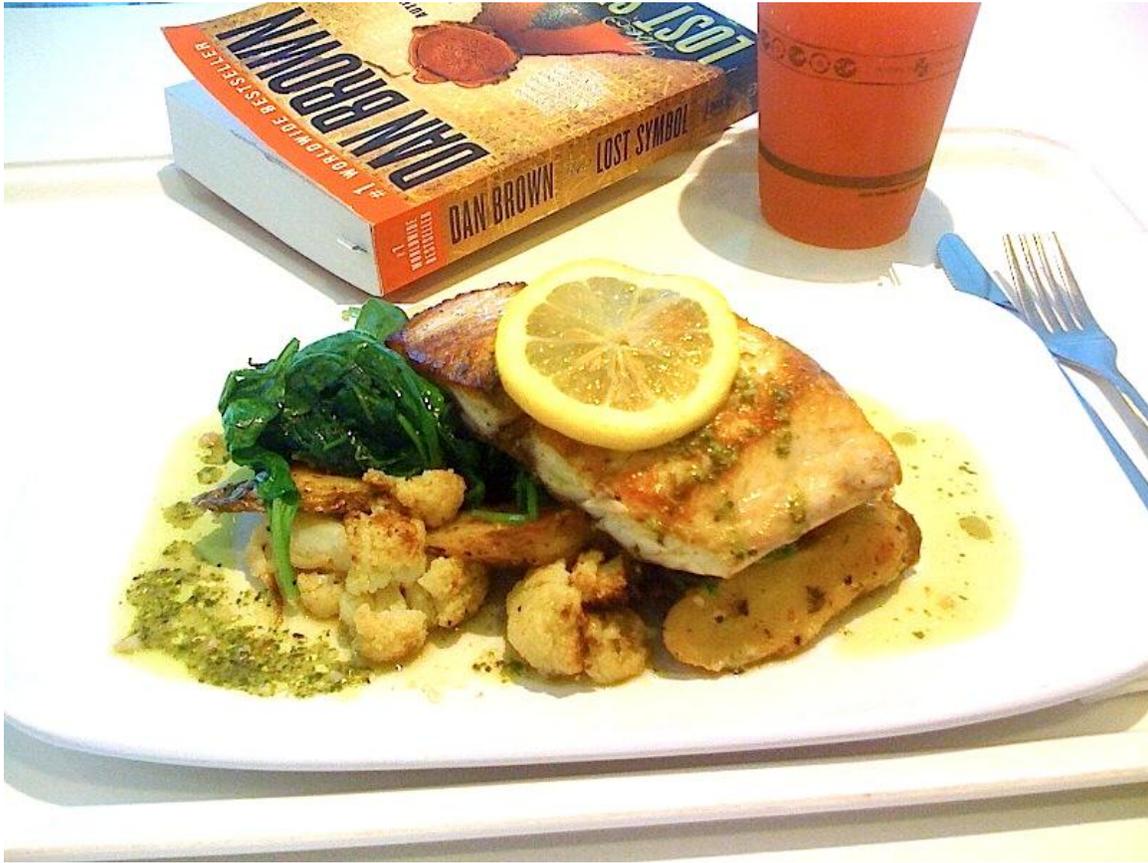
11:21

Ben

Photos: Yesterday's Lunch at Apple

And a lovely, well-balanced and delicious meal it was! My beautiful redfish filet was quite succulent, seared to a golden crisp pellicle with a soft, moist, translucent flaky interior: wonderful! The arugula had been cooked just enough to soften it, leaving it still toothsome and firm and still in full possession of its sharp savory flavor. The fingerling potatoes were somehow rich to the palate; I am not sure why. Cooked to a tender softness, they contrived to be both fluffy and moist, and ... nuttier, perhaps than usual. The herb-oil dressing complemented and bound the various components nicely.

The pastry line has a new item, too: Banana Caramel Roll. Each one contains an entire banana, so this is not a petite dessert!



Seared Gulf Redfish over Wilted Arugula with Roasted Cauliflower and Fingerling Taters

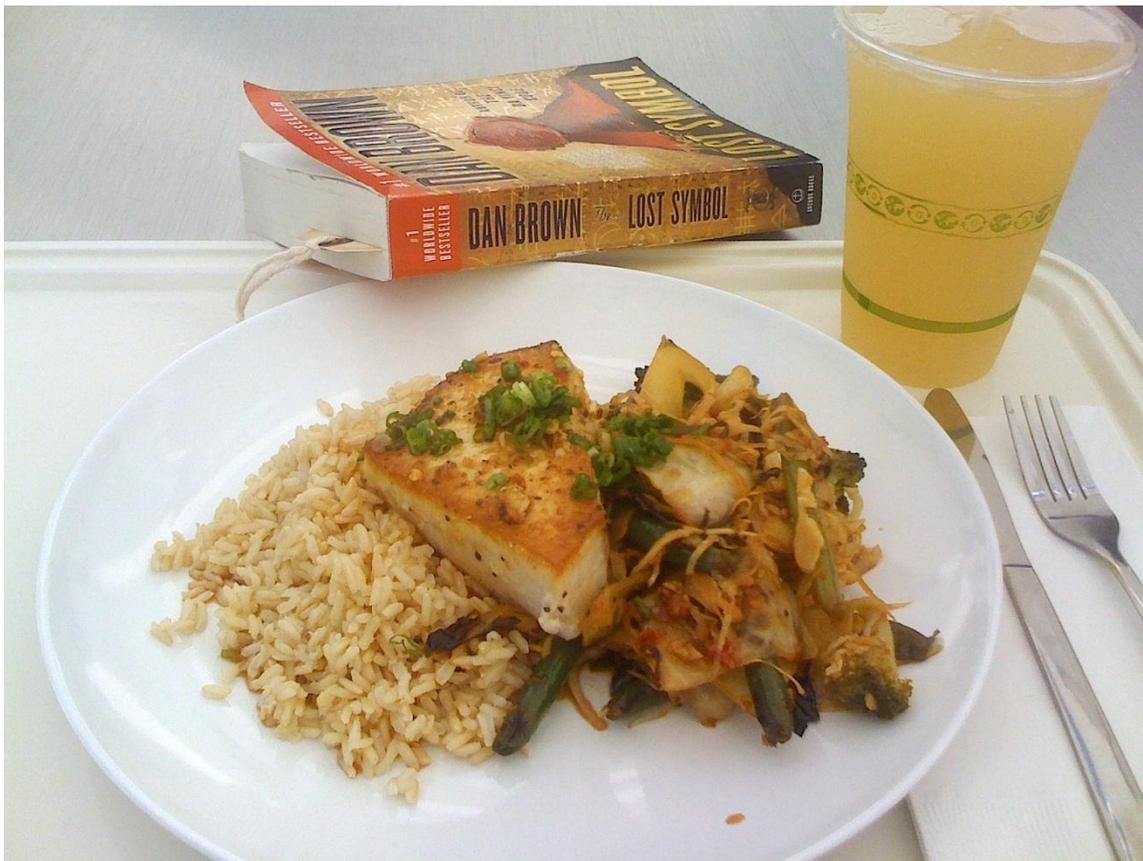


Faith's Gauntlet (new item!)

It's still amazing to me, that I get a meal like this for \$7. It's served on a plastic plate, and the flatware isn't up to the Adolphus Hotel, maybe, but doggone! You just can't fault the food! Even more appealing yet is the sheer variety, driven by the minds of talented chefs encouraged to follow their hearts (and eyes, noses, and stomachs).

Today's blast of flavor came from the Asian line. Chef Bladimir arrayed a lovely foundation of brown rice on my plate, with generous scoops of cabbage and green beans done in a style that might be Korean, or might be something else entirely. Blad said he'd ask Chef Alejandro, who was slaving back in the kitchen to keep up with requests. Chef Patricia's Cajun Surf and Turf (Gulf Shrimp Etouffee and blackened chicken with fried okra) was the high-demand dish from the look of things today, but the Asia-line swordfish gave it a good run for the money. Seven bucks. Out in the real world, that buys a fast-food burger, or a sandwich with fries and a soda. But not a real lunch. Hah!

My -perfectly- seared fresh Rhode Island swordfish was very moist, very tender, and very, very flavorful. I'll have to ask Alex on Monday what he did to it; I couldn't tell. Perhaps it's just a swordfish thing; every time I've had it not-overcooked, it's always seemed to have an un-fishlike robustness of flavor. Just a light poke of the fork sheered off thin flakes of delight, so I was able to eat my filet in subtle stages along with all the rest of my meal. The veggies, which may have been wokked, were spot-on; the beans were still quite crisp, the cabbage leaves crisp in their thicker middles. The other threadlike strands of cabbage were tender, of course, and combined with a thin fiery garlic dressing, made me think "Korean", although that is as yet undetermined. The brown rice had just the right degree of firmness, and really did 'draw the dish together' (to borrow a TV cliché, aptly applied here) to support the freshness of the veggies with the chili-infused sauce and the mildness of a finely tuned piece of excellent fish very nicely. Yum!



Seared Swordfish with Cabbage and Green Beans over Brown Rice



Faith's Gauntlet Features Flourless Hazelnut French Vanilla Cake Roll

20120907-09	12:11	SteveB	"Paul Ryan Acknowledges Requesting Federal Money from Program Funded by Obamacare"
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More Republican hypocrisy!

"Paul Ryan Acknowledges Requesting Federal Money from Program Funded by Obamacare" by Tara Culp-Ressler, Think Progress/NationofChange

Sept. 7, 2012, (<http://www.nationofchange.org/paul-ryan-acknowledges-requesting-federal-money-program-funded-obamacare-1347031611>)

Earlier this week, the *Nation* uncovered the fact that Paul Ryan — who has voted with his party to repeal President Obama’s health care law over 30 times — requested Obamacare funds for his Wisconsin district in 2010. However, after the news broke that Ryan sought to fund a new community health center with federal money provided through health care reform, his campaign was quick to retort that grant program has nothing to do with supporting Obamacare because it was created under former President George W. Bush.

Bush did support federal grant programs for community health centers during his presidency. But the specific grant requested by Ryan is funded through Obamacare, which provides \$11 billion to expand community health centers. When Ryan requested the funds in 2010, they represented money that Obama approved — under a law that Ryan has referred to as "Washington’s reckless spending spree."

As the Huffington Post points out, it’s difficult to understand the distinction between Ryan’s support for Bush’s health care spending and his opposition to the exact same health care spending under Obamacare:

But the response from Ryan's spokesman [Brendan Buck] also raises a question about the candidate's philosophy on federal spending on health care: Why would he consider dollars approved by Bush to be a good use of money, but funds approved by Obama to be bad?

"Don't dumb things down," Buck suggested to HuffPost. "You think he's opposed to all federal spending on health care? Health care spending makes up a significant portion of his budget."

On the specific program in question, related to community health centers, Buck said Ryan was merely supporting a constituent. "It's casework," he said. "As a general principle he's not going to turn away his constituents who come to him for help based on his own views of a program."

Ryan is not alone in his hypocrisy. A laundry list of Republican lawmakers have suggested scrapping Obamacare only to replace it with the exact same health reform measures. When health care reform is acceptable under Republicans but unconstitutional under Obama, GOPers expose themselves as putting partisanship over policy.

20120908-06 10:07 SteveB "Flip Side of Sarah Palin"

"Flip Side of Sarah Palin" by Jonathan Bernstein, Salon

Sept. 8, 2012, (http://www.salon.com/2012/09/08/flip_side_of_sarah_palin/)

(The past two weeks have shown us that Paul Ryan isn't so different from the GOP's last pick for vice president.)



What was the biggest difference between the Tampa Republicans and the Charlotte Democrats? That's easy: substance. Policy substance, that is. Bill Clinton's tour de force on Wednesday night was a substantive defense of Barack Obama's accomplishments and attacks on Mitt Romney's proposals. Obama, too, got a little on the wonky side; the first half of his speech reminded people of a State of the Union, with a laundry list of programs to defend and propose. In Tampa? Not so much. Lots of effect, but a lot less policy.

Paul Ryan, we were all told when he was selected, was a wonk; his selection meant that we were going to have a big ideas debate. And yet his vice-presidential speech was anything but, and what substance he did include was blasted by the fact checkers.

Sort of the way another Republican running mate was blasted for inaccuracies in her convention speech four years ago. Remember how she bragged about opposing the bridge to nowhere, only to have it be revealed that she had first supported it?

OK. Paul Ryan is no Sarah Palin. He is, after all, the chairman of the House Budget Committee, and he certainly knows federal public policy issues far better than the Sage of Wasilla ever has.

And yet Ryan's reputation for true wonkishness seems to be vastly overstated. He's less a wonk than a policy naïf's idea of a wonk – just enough "baselines" and "percent of GDP" and charts to make it all look nice, but very little under the hood. As Paul Krugman said recently:

Look, Ryan hasn't "crunched the numbers"; he has just scribbled some stuff down, without checking at all to see if it makes sense. He asserts that he can cut taxes without net loss of revenue by closing unspecified loopholes; he asserts that he can cut discretionary spending to levels not seen since Calvin Coolidge, without saying how; he asserts that he can convert Medicare to a voucher system, with much lower spending than now projected, without even a hint of how this is supposed to work. This is just a fantasy, not a serious policy proposal.

Krugman is concerned in that post with how Ryan dupes self-proclaimed budget hawks, but Ryan is duping Republicans, too.

Of course he is; who would know? We're talking about a party that accepted Palin as a candidate qualified for the presidency in 2008, and that fell for Herman Cain at one point in the nomination fight last year. Granted, the rank-and-file voters aren't going to be checking the math of their congressional leadership, but neither is anyone else. Or if they are, they are rapidly named RINOs and escorted from the party.

No, again, Ryan isn't Cain, either. But a genuine wonk wouldn't be passing off phony numbers.

The thing is, Republicans have spent 30 years convincing themselves of several things that combine to make real policy expertise a dangerous thing to have for their politicians. One is Reagan-worship, which has often taken the form of contrasting Reagan's ignorance of details and clear "big-picture" view with Jimmy Carter's micromanaging. A second is anti-elitism, which dates back at least to the Nixon/Agnew attack on the press and academics, leaving current movement conservatives with an often-remarked virtually postmodern rejection of any objective truth. And then there are the RINO-hunters, who are eager to pounce on anyone who deviates from whatever the current party line might be.

Real wonks, however, do know the details. They talk about policy and not in platitudes, which puts them on the record in ways that can harm them when the party line changes. And the truth is that you can't be a real wonk if you don't accept some sort of objective standards and reality, even if it's only the tyranny, as Bill Clinton said, of arithmetic.

So what's a Republican politician to do? Palin's path is one option: simply don't concede the need to have any idea what you're talking about at all. Policy knowledge is per se elitist and therefore suspect.

But Ryan has found another, perhaps even better path. Not becoming a conservative wonk, because under present conditions that can't be done, but by becoming a faux wonk. Retain the movement's disdain for objective truth, details and even real position-taking (after all, Ryan easily slipped from bashing Affordable Care Act Medicare cuts in 2010 to supporting them in 2011 to opposing them again once he was on the ticket in 2012). But learn to use words such as "entitlements" and "reconciliation" and snow the rubes under with charts and PowerPoint presentations. And a bonus: A fair chunk of people who aren't even conservatives will buy it and enhance your prestige.

The latter worked fine as long as Ryan was somewhat under the radar (and you know that the kinds of people who get duped by that act are the kind who don't really take congressional action very seriously anyway). It was, to some extent, exposed in Tampa.

Yet Ryan's reputation among movement conservatives is absolutely secure, and there's every possibility he could be vice president of the United States next year, and a future president. And surely he's far more qualified for that spot than Sarah Palin. But not by as much as you might think.

[20120907-10](#) 14:14 Mark Re: Video: "David after Dentist" (reply to Pam, FotM Newsletter #221)

Very familiar with this, but fun every time I see it! There's more than one of these post-op videos around, I remember one where a gal describes riding on a flying unicorn after wisdom teeth removal...

[20120907-12](#) 17:09 Art "Finally, the Democrats Learn How to Fight"

Interesting article.

Has it struck anyone else that, when you look at the overall track record of the two parties, the Democrats are proud to have a former President be a part of their convention while the Republicans are so ashamed of theirs, they don't even invite him? Tells you something, doesn't it. Where was Bristol Palin? That's what I want to know.

[Looks to me, Art, like they just threw them all away, especially Bush, McCain, and Palin! Nice party! –SteveB]

"Finally, the Democrats Learn How to Fight" by Carla Seaquist, Huffington Post

Posted: 09/04/2012, (http://www.huffingtonpost.com/carla-seaquist/democrats-election-2012_b_1841961.html)

So, the 2012 presidential campaign has turned "nasty". Both teams scream foul, the commentariat and the Sunday talk shows replay "a-nasty-campaign-gets-nastier" theme, the September cover of *The Atlantic* features Barack Obama and Mitt Romney as boxers -- heavy-weight, from the look of it -- slugging it out, with sweat flying.

Finally! I thought we'd never get here.

Not that I want a nasty fight. I just want a fight -- a decent defense of the Democratic agenda. And now we have it -- finally -- at the 11th hour: President Obama and Congressional Democrats are returning fire, pretty effectively.

But is it too late?

For way too long, defense was not happening. Early on after his inauguration, President Obama lost control of the narrative, going for bipartisan cooperation -- a campaign promise -- while Republicans made clear early on their rejection of such cooperation, instead forming their Wall of No. Only because Democrats controlled both houses of Congress could Mr. Obama get his healthcare bill passed -- another campaign promise. In the 2010 midterms the GOP exploited the unpopularity of "Obamacare" to take back the House and turn even more obstructionist, threatening to cause the U.S. to default on its full faith and credit in the 2011 debt ceiling fiasco.

Meanwhile, even more obstructionist and meeting even less pushback, the Tea Party emerged, screaming (literally) their anti-government screed. I still regret not standing up at a local town hall they commandeered, to point out that "all those bailouts" of the banks were initiated by their guy, George W. Bush; that the "out-of-control government spending" was Mr. Obama's effort to repair the damage done by the financial crash that erupted on their guy's watch; and, by the way, where were they with their concerns about spending when Mr. Bush took us from a budget surplus he inherited from Mr. Clinton and flung us deep into deficit and debt -- talk about a wind-in-the-hair ride! -- with one of the costliest and unnecessary (and thus wasteful) items being the Iraq war? Yet I also recall the fear of many in the hall that these screamers might be armed, so we sat silent.

Whenever Democrats did weigh in, if they pointed back to the Bush administration for cause, they were accused by Republicans of "playing the blame game." Enough of this tactic and soon Mr. Bush became a non-person in Republican mythology. And soon Republicans made it stick that Mr. Obama, while he didn't cause the bad economy, now "owned" it. Checkmate.

Point is: All possible lines of defense, for whatever reason, were not taken up by the Democrats, with the result that the Republicans, nominally out of power, soon came to dominate policy discussions and revise recent history. So confident were they of their grip on power that, two years in, Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell announced the GOP's top priority would be to deny President Obama a second term. I don't recall many Democrats protesting that the Republicans' top priority should be to help fix the economy they themselves wrecked and citing them as a disloyal opposition (as I wrote here).

Nor should we forget the Republican dissing of Mr. Obama, with the "birther" drivel, the speculation about his being insufficiently American, and Sarah Palin's dopey "hopey-changey" taunt. As MSNBC's Chris Matthews asked, "Where were Obama's defenders, where were his lieutenants?"

Not helping was the fact that the Obama White House was singularly inept in putting up its own defense, including getting out news of its achievements. For example, "all those bailouts" of the banks have been -- did you know this? -- two-thirds paid back to the taxpayer, with interest. Proper White House messaging of this good news might have mooted one of the Tea Party's main screaming points.

Observing the general lameness of the Democratic defense, rank-and-file Democrats became demoralized (too quickly for my taste, but...). In a representative democracy, we rely on our elected representatives to carry our argument into the arena; when they don't, when the argument is jammed, demoralization, disaffection, disgust ensue. We came to feel what any political operative knows: that a charge unanswered is a charge that sticks. And the more unjust the charge -- i.e., inept governance, incompetent stewardship of the economy -- when unanswered, the more it sticks, and stings, in the craw. With Democrats and Mr. Obama getting rolled again and again and again, I finally grew so frustrated I considered registering as an Independent.

But now, with the mortal fear of losing the White House, and with the clarification of positions provided by Romney's V.P. pick of the far-right Congressman Paul Ryan, the Democrats have come alive, shouldered arms.

Mr. Obama now makes explicit his defense of Main Street, having met with little success in dealing with Wall Street to curb its excesses. He's now making the fairness issue personal, aligning himself with Main Street against "people like him" (Romney and the wealthy): "He's asking you to pay more so that people like him can get a big tax cut" (see here). In reaction, former Bush speechwriter Michael Gerson recently accused Mr. Obama of "betrayal" for running an "unethical" campaign. No, Mr. Gerson, if there was betrayal or unethical behavior, it was the Republicans' abandonment of country for party.

To continue, Vice President Joe Biden's recent ringing defense of Social Security, crown jewel of FDR's New Deal -- "I flat guarantee it" -- was both strong and refreshing: Finally, a muscled defense. His formulation that "General Motors is alive and Osama bin Laden is dead" cogently expresses two of the administration's achievements. Yes, Biden's "chains" comment to an African-American crowd was a jab too far, but he didn't apologize, and rightly so. Congressional Democrats have also turned up the heat. Especially impressive is Chris Van Hollen (MD) with his concise and tough defense of Medicare, now under attack by the Ryan budget (see also here).

Of course, Democrats' newly-energized defense of entitlement programs must come with equally powerful plans for their reform and sustainability. Defend-and-pivot, if you will.

Possibly the most powerful defense strategy comes from former White House press secretary Robert Gibbs, who casts the Republican message to Democrats as, "You guys didn't clean up our mess fast enough." This states it -- who made the mess and who's ducking responsibility for repairing it -- and is a theme Democrats should press until November. (Would that Gibbs had stated it while in the White House.)

Other fight strategies: Barrel through charges of "blame game" by dropping reference to Bush and instead attack his administration's policies that brought us to our knees -- out-of-control government spending, two unfunded wars, deregulation, tax cuts for the rich that added to the deficit. Press on and charge Republicans with the irresponsibility game. Notch up the language: Enough with the clichéd "failed policies of the past," go to "catastrophic" and "calamitous."

And to all lieutenants and defenders, in the arena and the rank-and-file: Henceforth, no Republican charge shall go unanswered -- none. That includes the Swift-boating now underway of President Obama for a signal achievement, the killing of Osama bin Laden. Swift-boating is a technique straight from the playbook of Bush strategist Karl Rove: Attack your opponent's strong points, not just his weak points. Democrats need to study well this playbook.

Now for the roll-out of the fighting Dems this week at the Democratic National Convention, perfectly timed to counter the misrepresentations and revisionist history aired at the Republican National Convention the week previous. And now also for the roll-out of the best possible weapon: the Obama vision and economic recovery plan, Part II.

Still, is this new combativeness enough and in time?

It is if the Democrats keep it up til November -- and beyond. A fighting Democratic party will recover the youth vote, which went for Obama in '08 but grew disaffected; it will motivate registered voters who now poll as unlikely to vote to get to the polls; and it will spark more big-time campaign contributions, because Obama & Co. will look like winners.

Crucially, if Mr. Obama wins re-election (and I predict he will), he and the Democrats must remain in fight mode -- repeat: remain in fight mode -- because victory will likely be sliver-thin and not a mandate. For Democrats must note another tenet of the Karl Rove playbook, which sets out the strategy for a permanent Republican majority: Make politics so nasty and distasteful that fewer and fewer will want to play or vote. Best never to forget: The Republicans are always in the mood and mode to fight.

And if Democrats find their sword arm getting tired and they weary of the long fight, they should remember the imperishable words of Joseph Welch, the lawyer who finally brought down the Communist-baiting Republican senator, Joseph McCarthy: "Tell them it was fun."

20120907-13 20:13 SteveM Fw: List of Republican Cuts in Ryan's Plan

[Source of original email unknown. You can also tell it's a little bit old. --SteveB]

List of Republican cuts

Clearly, Paul Ryan knows how to make the cuts necessary to get this country back on track. Notice S.S.. and the military are NOT on this list These are all the programs that the new Republican House has proposed cutting. Read to the end and pass it on to as many as you can.

- Corporation for Public Broadcasting Subsidy -- \$445 million annual savings.
- Save America's Treasures Program -- \$25 million annual savings.
- International Fund for Ireland -- \$17 million annual savings.
- Legal Services Corporation -- \$420 million annual savings.
- National Endowment for the Arts -- \$167.5 million annual savings.
- National Endowment for the Humanities -- \$167.5 million annual savings.
- Hope VI Program -- \$250 million annual savings.
- Amtrak Subsidies -- \$1.565 billion annual savings.
- Eliminate duplicating education programs -- H.R. 2274 (in last Congress), authored by Rep. McKeon, eliminates 68 at a savings of \$1.3 billion annually.
- U.S. Trade Development Agency -- \$55 million annual savings.
- Woodrow Wilson Center Subsidy -- \$20 million annual savings.
- Cut in half funding for congressional printing and binding -- \$47 million annual savings.
- John C. Stennis Center Subsidy -- \$430,000 annual savings.
- Community Development Fund -- \$4.5 billion annual savings.
- Heritage Area Grants and Statutory Aid -- \$24 million annual savings.
- Cut Federal Travel Budget in Half -- \$7.5 billion annual savings
- Trim Federal Vehicle Budget by 20% -- \$600 million annual savings.

- Essential Air Service -- \$150 million annual savings.
- Technology Innovation Program -- \$70 million annual savings.
- Manufacturing Extension Partnership (MEP) Program -- \$125 million annual savings.
- Department of Energy Grants to States for Weatherization -- \$530 million annual savings.
- Beach Replenishment -- \$95 million annual savings.
- New Starts Transit -- \$2 billion annual savings.
- Exchange Programs for Alaska Natives, Native Hawaiians, and Their Historical Trading Partners in Massachusetts -- \$9 million annual savings
- Intercity and High Speed Rail Grants -- \$2.5 billion annual savings.
- Title X Family Planning -- \$318 million annual savings.
- Appalachian Regional Commission -- \$76 million annual savings.
- Economic Development Administration -- \$293 million annual savings.
- Programs under the National and Community Services Act -- \$1.15 billion annual savings.
- Applied Research at Department of Energy -- \$1.27 billion annual savings.
- Freedom CAR and Fuel Partnership -- \$200 million annual savings.
- Energy Star Program -- \$52 million annual savings.
- Economic Assistance to Egypt -- \$250 million annually.
- U.S. Agency for International Development -- \$1.39 billion annual savings.
- General Assistance to District of Columbia -- \$210 million annual savings..
- Subsidy for Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority -- \$150 million annual savings.
- Presidential Campaign Fund -- \$775 million savings over ten years.
- No funding for federal office space acquisition -- \$864 million annual savings.
- End prohibitions on competitive sourcing of government services.
- Repeal the Davis-Bacon Act -- More than \$1 billion annually.
- IRS Direct Deposit: Require the IRS to deposit fees for some services it offers (such as processing payment plans for taxpayers) to the Treasury, instead of allowing it to remain as part of its budget - \$1.8 billion savings over ten years.
- Require collection of unpaid taxes by federal employees -- \$1 billion total savings. WHAT THE HELL IS THIS ABOUT?
- Prohibit taxpayer funded union activities by federal employees -- \$1.2 billion savings over ten years.
- Sell excess federal properties the government does not make use of -- \$15 billion total savings.
- Eliminate death gratuity for Members of Congress. WHAT???
- Eliminate Mohair Subsidies -- \$1 million annual savings.
- Eliminate taxpayer subsidies to the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change -- \$12.5 million annual savings WELL ISN'T THAT SPECIAL
- Eliminate Market Access Program -- \$200 million annual savings.
- USDA Sugar Program -- \$14 million annual savings.
- Subsidy to Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) -- \$93 million annual savings.
- Eliminate the National Organic Certification Cost-Share Program -- \$56.2 million annual savings.
- Eliminate fund for Obamacare administrative costs -- \$900 million savings.
- Ready to Learn TV Program -- \$27 million savings..WHY?????
- HUD Ph.D. Program.
- Deficit Reduction Check-Off Act.

TOTAL SAVINGS: \$2.5 Trillion over Ten Years.

My question is, what is all this doing in the budget in the first place?

20120907-15	20:38	SteveB	Re: List of Republican Cuts in Ryan's Plan (reply to SteveM, above)
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There's another good article on this subject:

<http://factcheck.org/2012/08/about-those-republican-cuts/>.

The military needs deep cuts!

[20120908-01](#) 01:35 SteveM Re: List of Republican Cuts in Ryan's Plan (reply to SteveB, above)

I read the article before I sent it to you.

One of my last gigs was on the Army Base on Kawajalien, Marshall Island. Let's cut the first lady's staff, date night, and golf first!!

[20120907-14](#) 20:20 SteveM Video: The Country Is Ruined!

One of your Friends of the Middle remarked that upon tuning to the DNC, he felt like it was like seeing the regular people he saw every day. I wonder if his regular folks have the same philosophies expressed in this video?

I have no words for this one.....NONE! Please have a trash can near you when you watch this....you may want to either throw up in it or put it on your head and run it into the wall.

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=07fTsF5BiSM&feature=player_embedded

[20120907-16](#) 20:59 SteveB Re: Video: The Country Is Ruined! (reply to SteveM, above)

No big deal. Loaded, leading questions of people often in a hurry...saying, "Ya, sure, anything to make you leave me alone."

Then, we don't really know how many hundreds of other people were bombarded with quick questions and answered reasonably, do we. Merely a slick propoganda piece...worthy of Hitler or Stalin or Mao. (see "Propaganda" article below.)

Regardless, nobody ever said stupidity recognizes any ideological boundaries, though there is a well documented sociological effect that dumb people *tend* to be conservative...

To me, it's interesting how interested you are in listening to these people who seek only to spread discontent and unhappiness with ulterior motives.

Surely, we can move in a positive direction and concentrate on solutions to problems. Many in the media make bunches of money stoking the fires of hatred and resentment. These men are the opposite of patriots...verily, they are traitors to their country. They destroy the ability of our institutions, like education or the military or the system of taxation, to function properly. All for money and power, not for the betterment of our nation. I, for one, grow weary of it.

So, you really don't think income taxes should go up for people making over \$250,000; offshore tax havens ended; offshore profits of American corporations repatriated and taxed now and in the future; legal abortions, fair and affordable health care, more resources devoted to public education and college students? I could go on...

Instead, you're for throwing in the towel, admitting we're a Third World country, and pretty much scrapping everything but the military, like Lyin' Ryan??? What a bleak future!

[20120908-02](#) 02:11 SteveM Re: Video: The Country Is Ruined! (reply to SteveB, above)

I doubt your assertion re: dumb people. The video doesn't back it up. Never have I see so many gleeful malcontents in one spot looking to take down someone simply because they were successful, That's not the America I know.

20120908-07

10:15

SteveB

Re: Video: The Country Is Ruined! (reply to SteveM, above) & "The Case for Romney' Gets a Little Bit Communist"

"The Case for Romney' Gets a Little Bit Communist" by Jillian Rayfield, Salon

Sept. 7, 2012,

(http://www.salon.com/2012/09/07/national_reviews_ryan_romney_cover_resembles_soviet_propaganda/)

(*National Review's* Ryan-Romney cover resembles Soviet propaganda.)

Paul Krugman (and Open Salon blogger Bob Calhoun) flagged the latest *National Review* cover, which makes "The Case for Mitt Romney," Soviet propaganda-style:



"Can Democrats, Republicans Run the Country While Living in Parallel Worlds?" by Glenn Kessler, *Washington Post*

Sept. 7, 2012, (http://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/can-democrats-republicans-run-the-country-while-living-in-parallel-worlds/2012/09/07/32498ebe-f92d-11e1-8b93-c4f4ab1c8d13_story.html)

Eight years ago, when Sen. John F. Kerry of Massachusetts was the Democratic nominee for president, he blasted then-President George W. Bush for his record on jobs. He often noted that Bush was on track to be the first president since Herbert Hoover to preside over a net loss in jobs.

Bush, by contrast, repeatedly proclaimed that 1.7 million jobs had been added since April 2003 — a cherry-picked date designed to put his jobs record in the best possible light.

With the economic shoe on the other foot, now it's GOP presidential nominee Mitt Romney who uses the attack lines honed by Kerry — and President Obama who relies on Bush's strained economic accounting.

Such manipulation of statistics is standard fare for political campaigns, which is one reason why voters should always take such claims with a grain of salt. Yet something deeper and more disturbing is also affecting the political system.

With the conclusion of the back-to-back political conventions, it is clear that both parties occupy parallel universes, with their own narratives and starkly different philosophies. The Fact Checker column tries to steer clear of philosophical disputes, but increasingly claims made by politicians are geared for the echo chamber of the party faithful.

As Democrats gathered in Charlotte for their convention, for instance, some readers raised questions about the opening line of a brief history of the political party on its Web site: "For more than 200 years, our party has led the fight for civil rights, health care, Social Security, workers' rights, and women's rights."

The sentence, and the accompanying history, seemed determined to airbrush out of existence the Democrats' troubled history on race relations, which lasted until the signing of the 1964 Civil Rights Act by President Lyndon B. Johnson firmly turned the bulk of the party in a new direction. (Still, 80 percent of the "no" votes in the Senate came from Democrats; the legislation would not have passed without the decisive support of Republicans.)

Meanwhile, Rep. James E. Clyburn (S.C.), in a speech to the convention Thursday evening, gave Democrats full credit for passage of Social Security in 1935 and Medicare in 1965, declaring that Republicans just "cursed the darkness" and "stood on the sidelines" when that legislation emerged from Congress.

In fact, Social Security passed with significant Republican support and Medicare was adopted with "yes" votes by a majority of Republicans in the House and a significant minority in the Senate.

(Clyburn said these words even after his revisionist history was criticized by FactCheck.org and had received Four Pinocchios from this column, based on an advance text distributed by Democrats.)

The bipartisan majorities of those past achievements are much less likely now. Back then, voting broke more along regional divisions rather than party lines, with southern Democrats in opposition and northern Republicans in support of such federal expansion of benefits. Many of those southern Democrats have since become Republicans, while the Northeast especially has turned largely Democrat.

The parties have become so homogenized, with so little internal disagreement about the challenges they believe the country faces, that the portraits they painted of the United States at the conventions represented two starkly different visions.

From the Democratic side, the focus was creating a level playing field for Americans who face obstacles or are disadvantaged, with the main tool usually government action.

Here is how Senate hopeful Elizabeth Warren of Massachusetts described the country in a speech to the convention: "The system is rigged. Look around. Oil companies guzzle down the billions in profits. Billionaires pay a lower tax rate than their secretaries, and Wall Street CEOs, the same ones that direct our economy and destroyed millions of jobs, still strut around Congress, no shame, demanding favors, and acting like we should thank them."

And, for Republicans, the concern was also on the individual, but centered on reining in a government that they believe has run amok.

This is how former Arkansas governor Mike Huckabee saw the nation in his speech at the GOP conclave: "We [Huckabee and Romney] are mutual opponents of the miserably failed experiments that have put this country in a downward spiral. The United States of America was originally an experiment. But it was an experiment in recognizing God-given individual liberty and creating a government in which we, no one is deemed better than another. And in which all of us are equal."

This poses a fact-checking conundrum. One can question some of the specific claims, such as billionaires paying a lower tax rate than their secretaries. (The data show that it is not especially common, just as the data suggest that voter fraud, a major concern of Republicans, happens only on rare occasions.) But it is virtually impossible — and probably foolhardy — to fact-check such deeply held beliefs.

In the halls of Congress, gerrymandered districts have reinforced these trends. Increasingly, the most important races are the primaries, the preserve of the party faithful, not the general election vote. That means members are more likely to represent the left and right wings of the parties, with fewer and fewer centrists becoming lawmakers.

If the two sides cannot even agree on the basic facts, then it becomes difficult to understand how they ever could reach agreement on the key issues that face the nation — such as strengthening the finances of the entitlement programs created many decades ago with bipartisan support that would be unimaginable today.

(Read more Fact Checker columns at: <http://www.washingtonpost.com/factchecker>.)

20120908-05	09:59	SteveB	"Obama, Clinton Scored Back-to-Back Home Runs with Their Speeches"
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"Obama, Clinton Scored Back-to-Back Home Runs with Their Speeches" by Robert Shrum, The Daily Beast

Sep 8, 2012, (<http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2012/09/08/obama-and-clinton-scored-back-to-back-home-runs-with-their-speeches.html>)

(Bill Clinton was justly praised for a great address (so great that it managed to praise the president while laying the groundwork for Hillary in 2016), writes Robert Shrum, who argues that Barack Obama has been grossly—and unjustly—shortchanged by the pundits.)

I received an email from one of the smartest reporters around who asked, "What does it say about the POTUS that he didn't even give the best speech of his own convention?" He was echoing the reaction of a broad swath of the pundit class. I replied, "I think it did just what it needed to do."

President Barack Obama and former president Bill Clinton after Clinton's speech at the Democratic National Convention in Charlotte, N.C. (Lucian Perkins / The Washington Post via Getty Images)

In fact, President Obama and the Democrats in Charlotte did almost everything possible to advance their prospects in 2012—and while President Clinton was a big part of that, he turned in a performance on Wednesday night that kicked off the 2016 campaign.

First, 2012. I wrote here that the relatively benign instant analysis of the Romney acceptance speech was way off the mark. Gallup soon informed us that it was by a wide margin the worst rated of the acceptance speeches the pollster has tested since 1996.

The Republican gathering in Tampa was like a business meeting—for the most part, emotionally and rhetorically arid. Just days later, Democrats rehabilitated the uses of eloquence. From the video tribute to Edward Kennedy through Obama's proclamation that "the harder [path]... leads to a better place," the president and his party proved anew that words—and images—have power.

There was Kennedy on film commanding a convention as he had so often in life—and then bringing the delegates to their feet as he rebuked Mitt Romney's fervent claim during their 1994 Senate debate that he supported *Roe v. Wade*. "I am pro-choice," Kennedy said. "My opponent is multiple choice." There was Massachusetts Gov. Deval Patrick reprising the 2004 star turn of an Illinois state senator named Barack Obama—followed by the first Hispanic keynoter, San Antonio Mayor Julian Castro, touching deep and resonant chords with the story of his life, and his immigrant family's. Then Michelle Obama delivered the best convention address ever by a first lady—not just saying but proving her point that while the president was changing the country, the presidency hadn't changed him.

This wasn't just a series of disconnected speeches. The Democrats were unfolding a narrative masterwork that connected Obama the person to the differences between him and Romney, while believably claiming that we are better off than four years ago—precisely because they didn't overclaim. It was a message that would run through the entire convention, reinforced by the non-politicians who graced the stage—from workers who were victims of Bain to a mother whose daughter, born with a congenital heart defect, no longer faces the threat that her treatment will be cut off since Obamacare outlaws lifetime limits on insurance coverage. Women and reproductive rights—and LGBT Americans and gay rights—weren't an afterthought, a half-hidden "interest group," but in the platform and on the platform.

The stagecraft was worthy of Ronald Reagan's image-meister Mike Deaver. It would even reach the once inconceivable point—with Joe Biden's speech, and John Kerry's, and veterans striding across the podium—where Democrats had and have the advantage on national security. And that wasn't just about the death of Osama bin Laden, who, as Kerry observed, is not better off than he was four years ago. The GOP ceded—inexplicably, yes, idiotically ceded—the high ground here when their nominee failed to mention the war in Afghanistan or to deign to acknowledge the Americans fighting there and finally coming home.

For the Democrats, Wednesday night was indelible, and will be remembered and treasured for many conventions to come. When the big dog took and held the big stage, it was less a speech than a happening—spontaneous, mesmerizing, and as GOP strategist Alex Castellanos observed, "a moment that likely reelected Obama." Bill Clinton explained the economy, health reform, the coming of the 2008 crash, tax fairness, regulation, the role of government—well, he seemed to explain nearly everything. And every step of the way, he talked about the president, this president—and not just himself. So did every other speaker; there was no reprise of the Romney-phobia that afflicted the GOP stars like New Jersey Gov. Chris Christie. Indeed Romney's name was heard more often in Charlotte than in Tampa.

Some critics like The Daily Beast's Michael Tomasky would later worry that Obama blew it in his own speech. What Tomasky "loved most" about Clinton's speech was that he called out Republican lies on the issues like jobs and Medicare. It was "great stuff," he argues—and it was. It was also Clinton's assignment. He was often manically and happily off script, but never off message. He was supposed to take out the trash so Obama could turn to the future—not with grandiose promises, but with credibility and humility.

In fact, the president's tempered approach tested well with voters who were dial-grouping the speech. So did his proposals, which this year didn't match the scale of financial reform or health care. Instead, he talked of 100,000 new teachers and a million new manufacturing jobs in the next four years—ideas that scored high in the survey research and which are consistent with Obama's commitment to government as a force for progress.

So Obama reached toward undecided voters while bringing an already fired-up convention to its feet. We will soon see numbers showing the so-called enthusiasm gap narrowing or even closing. This is a party that believes in itself and its nominee—unlike the other side, which grudgingly settled for Mitt. If Hispanics turn out, if women shift more

decisively to Obama, then Romney has no road to the White House. And after this convention, that's far less an "if" than a likelihood. At the same time, the president gave swing voters new reasons to stand with him.

You have to credit the Obama campaign—and the man at the top—with a remarkable degree of skill matched by coolness and nerve. All year long, they have refused to accept the Republican terms of reference for 2012—for an election as a simple referendum on the state of an economy that the GOP has worked mightily to hold back and mess up. The contest is now a choice, a word Obama and other speakers repeated constantly. The question is this: Who cares about the middle class, and who favors the few?

But coolness and nerve are not only measured in message discipline, but in the adversity of mistakes. The campaign—in this case, Obama himself—righted the initial platform's omission of "God" and Jerusalem as Israel's capital. Why on earth...? he asked—and directed that a fix be gavelled through. It was awkward, but far better than Romney's fearful aversion to correcting the GOP's proposed ban on abortion even in cases of rape and incest. Republicans will try to exploit the episode, but in the end, it may help Obama. He's the one who ordered the change; voters will know it—and they know that they're electing a president, not a platform.

The Obama campaign also ignored the warnings that Clinton couldn't be trusted, that putting him front and center could be dangerous, that he wasn't vetting his speech with them—and Obama's might be compared unfavorably with his. The president and his advisers understood this wasn't a high-school oratorical contest.

In contrast, the Romney enterprise tried to play their own Clinton card all summer. Obama was no Clinton, they said, elevating the man their party had once despised with equal fervor and rushed to impeach. They turned Clinton into a kind of referee. They reinforced his standing with Americans battered by the Bush economic collapse. The night he spoke in Charlotte, he took with him into the klieg lights a 69 percent approval—his highest rating ever. Having validated Clinton, the Romneyites then watched him pulverize their race-baiting fraud that Obama has undone the work requirements of welfare reform—so he can give more taxpayer money to you know who. Clinton, who signed welfare reform into law, set the record straight with a smile and an accessible, unquestioned authority enhanced by the Republicans' crocodile praise for the former president.

Did they really think he would diss Obama, or shortchange him—or do anything but support him wholeheartedly? They misread the man and the politics. A top GOP strategist commented to me, "Politics is so much like chess, and so many people play checkers."

The Obama campaign understands this. And so does someone else. Bill Clinton's formal role on Wednesday was to nominate the president. In reality, he delivered two nominating speeches. He nominated Obama this year—and Hillary in 2016. Despite past enmities, he genuinely hopes to see Obama win because he believes it's right for the country. And he knows it's right for Hillary.

He wants her to run. As one Clintonite recently reported, she says she doesn't want to, but he thinks that after a year out of her job as secretary of state, to borrow a phrase, she'll be fired up and ready to go. Her odds of victory then will be higher if Obama prevails now—despite a speculative mini-storm that preceded the Charlotte convention. In *The New Yorker*, "two people with direct knowledge" were quoted saying that Bill Clinton's top aide, Doug Band, was voting for Romney—to help Hillary.

I don't doubt two people said it to the reporter, but they don't know much about politics. Band is anything but stupid. He and Clinton have both certainly read and almost certainly credit the assessment of Clinton's college classmate and former Treasury Undersecretary Roger Altman that within four years, "it is possible that the U.S. economy will surprise on the upside...[with] growth beyond the 2.5 percent that is widely seen as its long-term potential. In other words, the famine could be followed by a feast."

Whoever is inaugurated on Jan. 20, 2013 would preside over that feast. How could Hillary defeat a President Romney in a time of prosperity? She would be imminently stronger running to succeed a President Obama whose policies have finally brought the nation through.

The polls in coming days will record the bounce for Obama. But the bounce that could count most in a base election has already happened. Democrats are galvanized by the best convention in modern history—by Bill Clinton's fiery

appeal and by Barack Obama's finely tuned and targeted acceptance address that lifted both the delegates and the dials of ordinary voters.

The Republicans not only impeached Bill Clinton—and tried but failed to convict him in the Senate. They scorned and smeared Hillary Clinton when she was the first lady. Now they speak kindly of both—at least they did until Charlotte. So maybe after four more years of Obama in the White House, they'll like eight more years of the Clintons back in the White House.

Maybe she won't run, but I can see it coming. What a week in politics: Obama bounces—and Clinton announces.

20120908-10	16:25	Tom	"FBI Begins Installation of \$1 Billion Face Recognition System Across America"
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"FBI Begins Installation of \$1 Billion Face Recognition System Across America" by RT

Sept. 8, 2012, (<http://rt.com/usa/news/fbi-recognition-system-ngi-640/>)

Birthmarks, be damned: the FBI has officially started rolling out a state-of-the-art face recognition project that will assist in their effort to accumulate and archive information about each and every American at a cost of a billion dollars.

The Federal Bureau of Investigation has reached a milestone in the development of their Next Generation Identification (NGI) program and is now implementing the intelligence database in unidentified locales across the country, New Scientist reports in an article this week. The FBI first outlined the project back in 2005, explaining to the Justice Department in an August 2006 document (.pdf) that their new system will eventually serve as an upgrade to the current Integrated Automated Fingerprint Identification System (IAFIS) that keeps track of citizens with criminal records across America.

"The NGI Program is a compilation of initiatives that will either improve or expand existing biometric identification services," its administrator explained to the Department of Justice at the time, adding that the project, "will accommodate increased information processing and sharing demands in support of anti-terrorism."

"The NGI Program Office mission is to reduce terrorist and criminal activities by improving and expanding biometric identification and criminal history information services through research, evaluation and implementation of advanced technology within the IAFIS environment."

The agency insists, "As a result of the NGI initiatives, the FBI will be able to provide services to enhance interoperability between stakeholders at all levels of government, including local, state, federal, and international partners." In doing as such, though, the government is now going ahead with linking a database of images and personally identifiable information of anyone in their records with departments around the world thanks to technology that makes fingerprint tracking seem like kids' stuff.

According to their 2006 report, the NGI program utilizes "specialized requirements in the Latent Services, Facial Recognition and Multi-modal Biometrics areas" that "will allow the FnewBI to establish a terrorist fingerprint identification system that is compatible with other systems; increase the accessibility and number of the IAFIS terrorist fingerprint records; and provide latent palm print search capabilities."

Is that just all, though? During a 2010 presentation made by the FBI's Biometric Center of Intelligence, the agency identified why facial recognition technology needs to be embraced. Specifically, the FBI said that the technology could be used for "Identifying subjects in public datasets," as well as "conducting automated surveillance at lookout locations" and "tracking subject movements," meaning NGI is more than just a database of mug shots mixed up with fingerprints — the FBI has admitted that this their intent with the technology surpasses just searching for criminals but includes spectacular surveillance capabilities. Together, it's a system unheard of outside of science fiction.

New Scientist reports that a 2010 study found technology used by NGI to be accurate in picking out suspects from a pool of 1.6 million mug shots 92 percent of the time. The system was tested on a trial basis in the state of Michigan earlier this year, and has already been cleared for pilot runs in Washington, Florida and North Carolina. Now according to this week's *New Scientist* report, the full rollout of the program has begun and the FBI expects its intelligence infrastructure to be in place across the United States by 2014.

In 2008, the FBI announced that it awarded Lockheed Martin Transportation and Security Solutions, one of the Defense Department's most favored contractors, with the authorization to design, develop, test and deploy the NGI System. Thomas E. Bush III, the former FBI agent who helped develop the NGI's system requirements, tells NextGov.com, "The idea was to be able to plug and play with these identifiers and biometrics." With those items being collected without much oversight being admitted, though, putting the personal facts pertaining to millions of Americans into the hands of some playful Pentagon staffers only begins to open up civil liberties issues.

Jim Harper, director of information policy at the Cato Institute, adds to NextGov that investigators pair facial recognition technology with publically available social networks in order to build bigger profiles. Facial recognition "is more accurate with a Google or a Facebook, because they will have anywhere from a half-dozen to a dozen pictures of an individual, whereas I imagine the FBI has one or two mug shots," he says. When these files are then fed to law enforcement agencies on local, federal and international levels, intelligence databases that include everything from close-ups of eyeballs and irises to online interests could be shared among offices.

The FBI expects the NGI system to include as many as 14 million photographs by the time the project is in full swing in only two years, but the pace of technology and the new connections constantly created by law enforcement agencies could allow for a database that dwarfs that estimate. As RT reported earlier this week, the city of Los Angeles now considers photography in public space "suspicious," and authorizes LAPD officers to file reports if they have reason to believe a suspect is up to no good. Those reports, which may not necessarily involve any arrests, crimes, charges or even interviews with the suspect, can then be filed, analyzed, stored and shared with federal and local agencies connected across the country to massive data fusion centers. Similarly, live video transmissions from thousands of surveillance cameras across the country are believed to be sent to the same fusion centers as part of TrapWire, a global eye-in-the-sky endeavor that RT first exposed earlier this year.

"Facial recognition creates acute privacy concerns that fingerprints do not," US Senator Al Franken (D-Minnesota) told the Senate Judiciary Committee's subcommittee on privacy, technology and the law earlier this year. "Once someone has your faceprint, they can get your name, they can find your social networking account and they can find and track you in the street, in the stores you visit, the government buildings you enter, and the photos your friends post online."

In his own testimony, Carnegie Mellon University Professor Alessandro Acquisti said to Sen. Franken, "the convergence of face recognition, online social networks and data mining has made it possible to use publicly available data and inexpensive technologies to produce sensitive inferences merely starting from an anonymous face."

"Face recognition, like other information technologies, can be source of both benefits and costs to society and its individual members," Prof. Acquisti added. "However, the combination of face recognition, social networks data and data mining can significant undermine our current notions and expectations of privacy and anonymity."

With the latest report suggesting the NGI program is now a reality in America, though, it might be too late to try and keep the FBI from interfering with seemingly every aspect of life in the US, both private and public. As of July 18, 2012, the FBI reports, "The NGI program ... is on scope, on schedule, on cost, and 60 percent deployed."

20120909-02	09:09	SteveB	"Mitt Romney's Skeleton Closet: Scandals, Quotes, and Character"
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Lots of good stuff here...

["Mitt Romney's Skeleton Closet: Scandals, Quotes, and Character" by Skeleton Closet](#)

undated, (<http://www.realchange.org/romney.htm>)

Other politicians look at this guy and say, "Wow, that dude is a phony, two-faced, flip-flopping weasel." And that's really saying something.

But there was a prophecy, the White Horse Prophecy spoken by Joseph Smith himself on May 6, 1843 in the presence of Edwin Rushton and Theodore Turley. It holds: "A terrible revolution will take place in the land of America, such as has never been seen before; for the land will be literally left without a supreme government. And every species of wickedness will run rampant."

Anyway, Mormons (the White Horse) will get rich with gold and minerals, the heathen Chinese will invade a land beyond the Rockies, banks in every nation except England and Utah will fail, and only the White Horse will remain to save the day. (We'll let you guess who the "Red Horse" and "Black Horse" represent.)

This prophecy was discussed when Mitt's dad, George, ran for president, and again when Orrin Hatch ran, and Glenn Beck dogwhistled it after Obama was elected. (No one brought it up with John Huntsman, though.) The Mormon Church does not endorse it formally, perhaps because of the part about how "the doings of the "Black" Horse will be terrible" because "they will have fear of becoming slaves again." But Mitt Romney and his father admit discussing it during George's presidential run.

Is now the time for Mitt Romney to ride to America's rescue? For "when the Constitution of the United States hangs, as it were, upon a thread as fine as a single silk fiber, they will have to call for the 'Mormon' Elders to save it from utter destruction; and they will step forth and do it."

[Continue reading at Skeleton Closet...](#)

20120909-03	09:28	MarthaH	Cartoon: Henrietta's Solution
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Finally, the answer we've all wanted to know...



20120909-04

11:39

SteveB

"Mitt Romney On Obamacare: 'I'm Not Getting Rid of All of Health Care Reform'"

What the hell does this guy believe in? Does he have any principles at all? Presidential material? What a weasel!

"Mitt Romney on Obamacare: 'I'm Not Getting Rid of All of Health Care Reform'" by San Stein, Huffington Post

Sept. 9, 2012, (http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/09/09/mitt-romney-obamacare- n_1868385.html)



(WASHINGTON) Mitt Romney said on Sunday that if he were elected president he would keep portions of President Barack Obama's signature health care law, a seemingly abrupt turn on an early campaign promise.

"Well, I'm not getting rid of all of health care reform," the former Massachusetts governor said in an interview with NBC's "Meet the Press." "Of course there are a number of things that I like in health care reform that I'm going to put in place. One is to make sure that those with pre-existing conditions can get coverage. Two is to assure that the marketplace allows for individuals to have policies that cover their family up to whatever age they might like. I also want individuals to be able to buy insurance, health insurance, on their own as opposed to only being able to get it on a tax advantage basis through their company."

The comments mark the latest chapter in Romney's tortured history with respect to federal health care reform. The Republican presidential nominee once envisioned the health care plan he passed in Massachusetts as a model for the nation. As a candidate for president in 2012, however, he has pledged to repeal the entirety of Obama's Affordable Care Act, a law very much based on Romney's Mass-Care model.

In his "Meet the Press" interview, Romney again pledged repeal of the law. But the suggestion that he would pass some of its individual provisions later in his term complicates that pledge.

"I say we're going to replace Obamacare," Romney said. "And I'm replacing it with my own plan. And even in Massachusetts when I was governor, our plan there deals with pre-existing conditions and with young people."

While that may be true, the Romney campaign has said in the past his federal plan wouldn't include such a provision.

Earlier this election, his campaign laid out a policy that ensures that a person who is covered by an employer and switches jobs could not be discriminated against because of a pre-existing condition during that job switch. The Obama campaign argued that that's already law. But the bigger question left unanswered was: what happens to those people just entering the labor market with a pre-existing condition? Would Romney pass laws prohibiting discrimination by insurance companies against them?

In a statement to The Huffington Post in June, Romney spokeswoman Andrea Saul confirmed that -- contra what Romney said Sunday -- he would not pass such a law, but rather push reforms to help alleviate the problem at the state level:

Fixing our health care system means making sure that every American, regardless of their health care needs, can find quality, affordable coverage. That is why Governor Romney supports reforms to protect those with pre-existing conditions from being denied access to a health plan while they have continuous coverage. And for those purchasing insurance for the first time, he supports reforms that empower states to make high risk pools more accessible by using cost reducing methods like risk adjustment and reinsurance. Beginning on his first day in office, Governor Romney is committed to working with Congress to enact polices like these that protect Americans' access to the care they need.

20120909-05	12:10	Pam	Re: "Mitt R0mney On Obamacare: 'I'm Not Getting Rid of All of Health Care Reform'" (reply to SteveB, above)
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Whatever the voters do in Nov. is going to be a clear indication of what kind of nation we are: selfish and self-reliant, or responsible and rational.

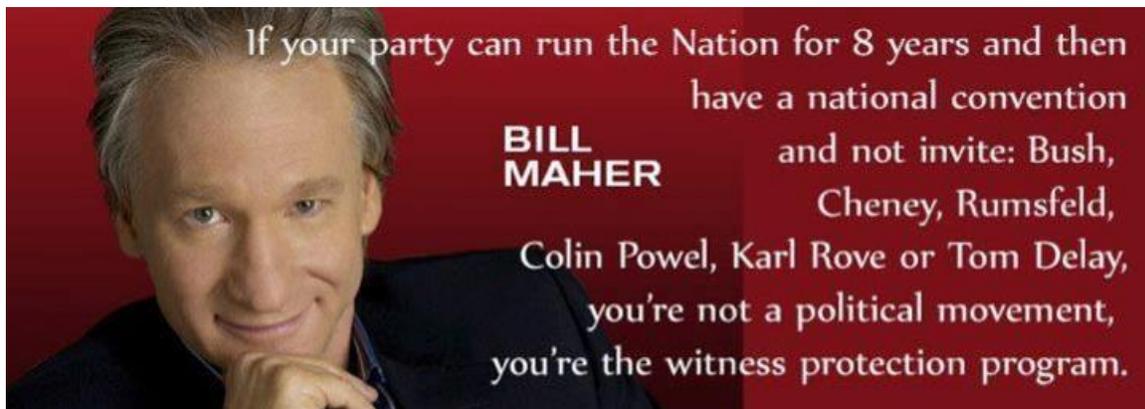
20120909-06	18:15	Ben	Re: "Mitt R0mney On Obamacare: 'I'm Not Getting Rid of All of Health Care Reform'" (reply to SteveB, above)
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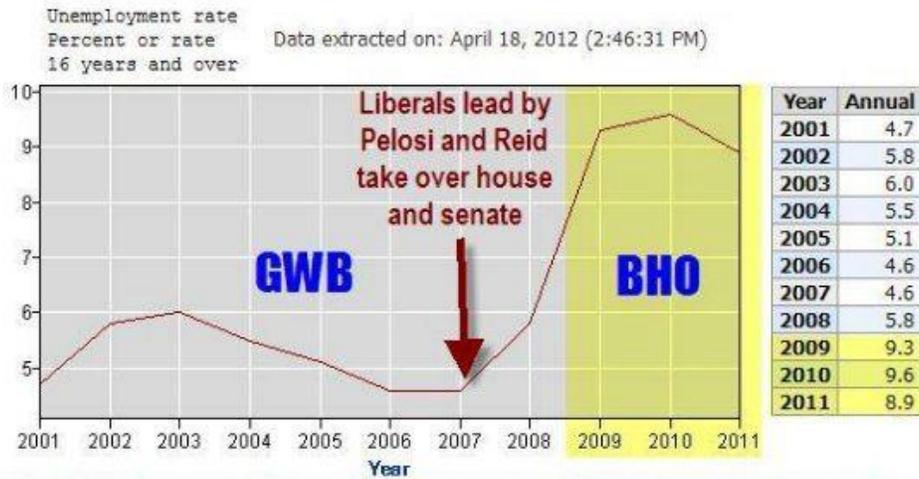
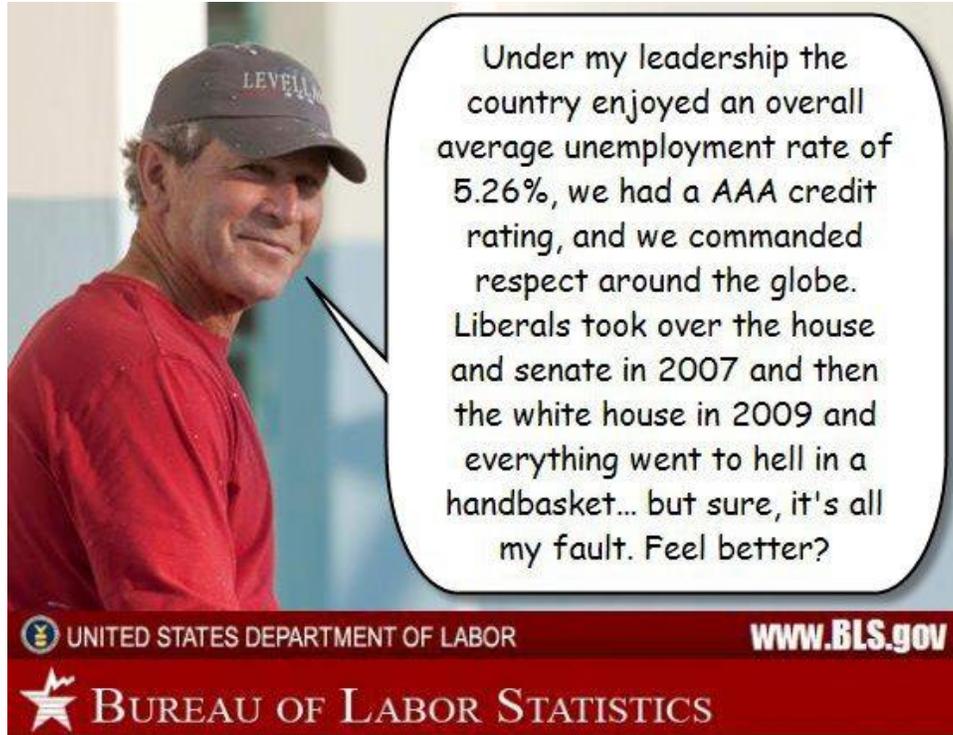
Odd. What a weird statement. [By R0mney? -SteveB]

I was unaware that anything prohibits me from wandering about the open market, purchasing insurance as I wish, with little or no regard to the 'tax advantage basis' insurance I enjoy through my employer.

20120909-07	21:24	SandyI	Quote: Bill Maher on Republicans
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Too good not to share...





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

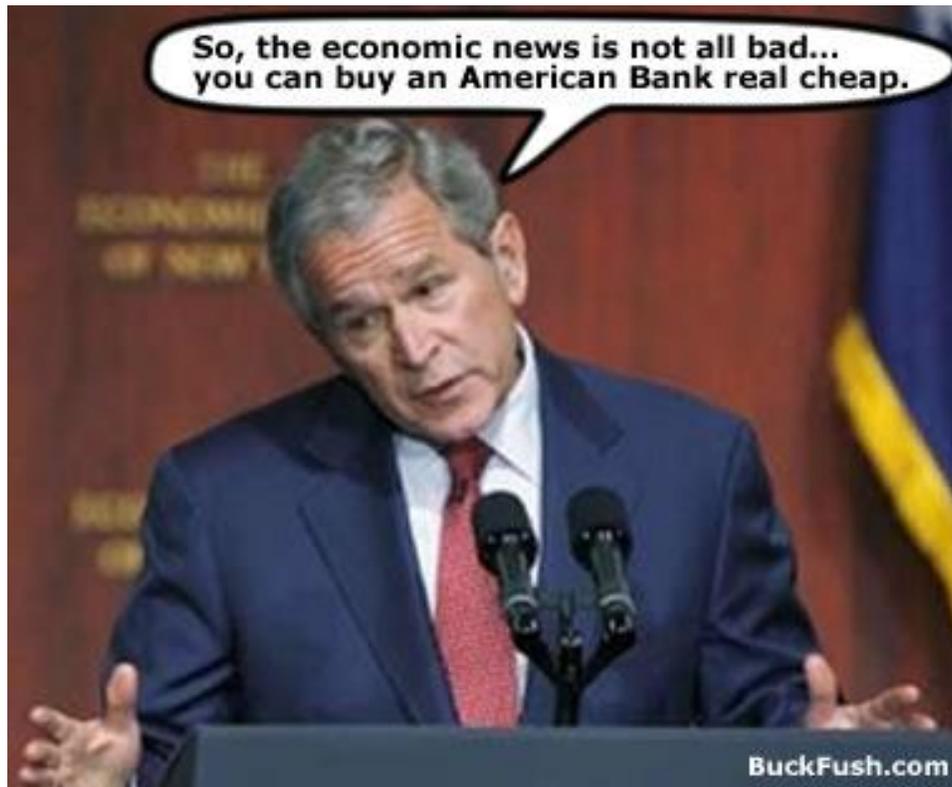
GWB average overall unemployment **BHO**
5.26% **9.27%**

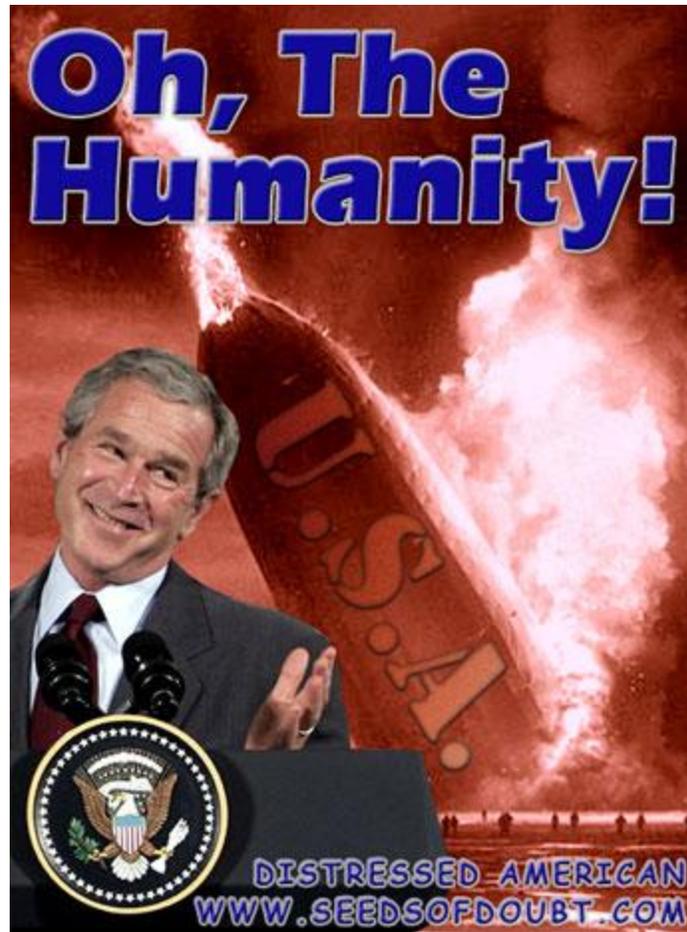
Boy, talk about lying statistics!

So...as a sanity check, just let me just ask you this: If Bush is so great and did such a great job, why was he not invited to the convention and asked to speak? Why wasn't he or his cohorts or their wars even mentioned?

Pretty revealing don't you think. If your claims (below) were true, W would be seen as a hero, not as a dunce by his own party.

Back at ya!





Interesting...an honest but disturbed assessment...

"2016: Obama's America Movie Is Disturbingly Necessary" by Scott Paulson, CBS

Aug. 17, 2012, (<http://newyork.cbslocal.com/2012/08/17/2016-obamas-america-movie-is-disturbingly-necessary/>)

This past week, *2016: The Movie*, about President Barack Obama, opened in the Chicago area, and I chose to get more of an education about Obama by seeing the movie. After the inundation of canned hype for the movie on conservative talk shows across the Chicago radio dial that sounded more like commercials than honest endorsements of the movie, I was skeptical of what I was going to see.

While some talk show hosts sounded like they were genuinely impressed with the documentary and honestly endorsing the film, there were those who were obviously reading a commercial script which was not coming across as sincere to the regular listener – at least not to this often-skeptical listener. Perhaps, in future promotions of the film, it would be wise to have pre-recorded commercials done by the professional commercial-makers rather than having the likes of Mark Levin and Sean Hannity doing script after script to promote the movie. After all, the listeners aren't stupid and resent any attempt at being conned. After many reads by the talk show hosts, the readings of the commercial script were no more enthusiastic than another Life-Lock commercial read – another commercial that ought to be professionally done.

Yet, I'm glad I saw the hyped-film because it was more informative than I had thought it would be and included less propaganda than I had predicted. If anything, it was nearly too informative as there was an enormous amount of information condensed into the nearly one-hour-and-a-half documentary. Fact after fact is put forth which shows that President Obama definitely has many skeletons in the closet that have not been released prior to the nation's trust in him with the Oval Office.

To watch this movie and realize – or simply be reminded of – all that is unknown about President Obama is of concern. Much of the information has been ignored by the American media totally. When appropriately reminded as to what is still unknown about Obama to date, one has to ask: How can any logical-thinking person give a damn about Romney's taxes while not asking any questions regarding our current president's past?

The man influences the entire globe, but liberal Americans want to know how much Mitt Romney paid in taxes in the past rather than learn about the man who they have entrusted with the country. Unbelievable.

The movie undeniably links Obama to persons of suspicious-interest due to their past actions and statements, such as former radical activist and Chicago educator Bill Ayers. While the media and blinded-liberals cast such facts aside, the movie does not. No, this portion of the movie is not propaganda – it is the display of factual information about relationships between people that cannot be denied. Yet, the "left" does deny the facts that are right in front of them.

Quite disturbing is the talk of the United States economy in the film. The current national debt which has increased two-fold during Obama's presidency and the horrendous economy is suggested to be part of the plan to strip the nation of democracy – reasonable cause to make citizens totally dependent on the government. The "left" is aghast at this suggestion of the current economy. They actually believe that Obama is unintelligent enough to let this economy just happen. Ironically, it's many of the people on the "right" who know Obama's not stupid, and much of what has happened to the United States in the past four years is part of Obama's plan.

How could one so-highly educated and intelligent as Obama not know what he was doing when he incurred such debt? I left the movie thinking more strongly than I had in the past that the current debt and this economy was part of Obama's plan all along. Increasingly making Americans dependent on the government is the plan. What's more, he knew his blind followers would believe it was not the plan and, of course, was all Bush's fault.

He must be laughing at his blind followers all the way to the "new America" they're allowing him to create. My belief is that Obama continues to prey on his die-hard followers' stupidity to accomplish his personal goals for America.

The most disturbing part of the film to me was the interview with President Obama's half-brother George Obama from Nairobi, Kenya. How can Obama claim to want to help people when he has done absolutely nothing for his own family? It makes me wonder if he really cares about anybody if he can't find it in his heart to help his own family.

As the closing credits started to role upward across the screen, the audience applauded. Me, I just walked out – reasonably upset.

Those who have already decided to vote for Obama will probably not even see the movie. It's sad but they probably don't want to know the truth when it is laid out so clearly for them in this documentary. The independents who are still deciding who they are going to vote for ought to see this film. I'm quite confident that any undecided voter who sees this film will know who to vote for after viewing this documentary. If you know you're not going to support the "left" in this coming election, see the film out of interest if you like. But, fair warning, it's disturbing – and quite frightening – to say the least.

20120909-12	23:24	SteveB	Re: "2016: Obama's America Movie Is Disturbingly Necessary" (reply to SteveM, above)
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Well, since the national debt has NOT "increased two-fold" under Mr. Obama and has historically increased much more under Republican than Democratic presidents...

THIS IS JUST MORE STUPID LIES! Can't you fact-check this stuff?

We're not like the R0mney campaign, we believe in truth and fact-checking around here (in case you didn't notice).

Take care. Cool down.

<http://www.narragansettbeer.com/2010/10/new-england-heritage-halloween-in-salem-ma>



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

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