



# FRIENDS OF THE MIDDLE NEWSLETTER #225 — SEPT. 13, 2012

*Welcome to always lively political discussion and whatever else comes up.*  
<http://www.FriendsOfTheMiddle.org> [FriendsOfTheMiddle@hotmail.com](mailto:FriendsOfTheMiddle@hotmail.com)

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## **Two Kinds of People**

(posted by Pam McRae, Sept. 13, 2012)

I just read in the *NYRB* about new books by Paul Krugman and Joseph Stiglitz. I'd like to summarize what I read and add some thoughts of my own.

*The Price of Inequality*, by Joseph E. Stiglitz (<http://www.nytimes.com/2012/08/05/books/review/the-price-of-inequality-by-joseph-e-stiglitz.html?pagewanted=all>)

*End This Depression Now!*, by Paul Krugman ([http://www.nytimes.com/2012/06/13/books/paul-krugman-and-timothy-noah-on-the-economy.html?pagewanted=all&\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2012/06/13/books/paul-krugman-and-timothy-noah-on-the-economy.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0) [moc.semityn.com](http://www.moc.semityn.com))



Krugman is a Keynesian, and we all know what that means. Stiglitz believes that greatly increased inequality is a bomb waiting to blow up our society, much as it has in the Middle East. When I sat down at my computer this morning, I was shocked to see that our ambassador to Libya has been assassinated, and more attacks are feared. This is appalling and an indication of how much we in the West are affected by the rage of the people we fear most. What Stiglitz warns against, and what troubles me also, is the possibility that if the hard-right Republicans continue to prevail, we might find ourselves in the midst of an "American spring." (My phrase.) The Ryan budget would take health insurance away from 50 million people. The tax breaks and subsidies to big oil, big pharma, the big banks, and big agriculture will exacerbate the degradation of the environment and further destabilize the economy. If unemployment, say, doubles, and the social safety net is rent (cuts to Medicare, Medicaid, student

loans, etc. etc.) then Occupy Wall Street will look like a bunch of Girl Scouts. It would probably take a while for the American public to wake up to what had happened to them, and by then it would be too late for anything but outright violence, and no one can predict where that might lead. Government is corrupt; it is corrupted by big money, but it is the only means we have for saving the country. The more entrenched ultra-conservative Republicans become in Congress and on the Supreme Court, the less we will be able to count on democracy to regain some balance. What Plato said in "The Republic" about the course of democracy appears to be coming true.

This is so obvious as to not need stating, but I repeat anyway, the Right argues values, beliefs, tradition, and questionable history. My right-leaning friends say, Well, the other side is just as bad. But it isn't. I can quote any number of right-wing pundits and politicians, and their words are most always vague abstractions: We believe in an America that believes in God, respects the sanctity of life, protects freedom, and encourages individual responsibility. A whole string of abstractions. Liberals don't talk about values; they talk about What To Do. Extend unemployment insurance. Cover 40 million uninsured Americans. Cut unnecessary subsidies to oil, pharmaceuticals, and agriculture. (I heard a farmer on NPR say he gets a ton of money from the government that he doesn't need. He was at a convention of farmers, and he told the reporter: Everyone in this room is a millionaire.) If someone could show me, with facts and figures and actual outcomes, that right-wing policies would help the country both individually and collectively, then by golly I'd embrace them. I'm not religious, but if someone could prove there is a benevolent god, I'd be happy to sign on. I wish there were such a deity, but I can't believe in a myth created by preliterate mythopoeic societies, and much of what I see in this "god-created" world are children maimed by war, genocide, illness in the young, and disintegration in the old. For every victim who survives the plane crash or the bomb blast and thanks providence, there are always those who don't. God's punishment? I don't think so. I wish a trickle-down economy worked, and I could wish that the "invisible hand" of a laissez-faire marketplace would balance everything out every time, but I have eyes in my head and a brain that can think, and the evidence convinces me otherwise.

There are, it seems to me, two kinds of people in the world: those who put ideas (ideology, religion, dogma, creed) above all else, and those who put people (their health and happiness) first, whatever they believe. No object is holy. No theory worth dying for. No "heresy" worth killing for. There must be something in our DNA, as Kofi Annan says, that makes human beings kill and torment each other. Sam Harris, one of the militant atheists I have read and whom I agree with much of the time, has written a book purporting that we have no free will. I believe we do have free will, and, therefore, the responsibility to put it to good use. Lt. Calley chose to kill women and children, and the soldier who refused his order to shoot, even when Calley threatened to shoot him, chose not to. I don't like hornets, but I know that if I leave them alone, they're not as likely to sting me. But if I go poking a stick into their hive, I can expect a torrent of angry, mindless creatures to make me wish I hadn't. That idiot who made the film critical of Islam that ignited the recent demonstrations against America in Libya and Egypt poked the hornets' nest. There is much truth in Christianity if you read it metaphorically, and one is surely that in a peaceable kingdom the lion will lie down with the lamb.

I read about the terrible fighting in Syria and a mother whose four-year old son lost his mind after months of bombings. In Syria we see a rich, privileged elite holding on for dear life to the old ways that made them secure. Assad is an educated man. He looks pretty normal, sitting in his easy chair beside whatever peacemaker is trying to talk some sense into him. I fear that he is all too normal, that his moral compass has been smashed by an isolation from his people that is so complete he has lost his humanity. Greed, power, wealth, and rage: these are what religions preach against because they are what dehumanize us. We don't need more religion; we need more humanity, and that means more hearts that beat, not more ideas that "inspire."

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| <a href="#">20120912-05</a> | 11:10 | SteveB | Re: Two Kinds of People (reply to Pam, above) |
|-----------------------------|-------|--------|---|

I like your thinking, Pam. I wonder if the "big abstractions" of the Right rather than concrete reality could be the reason behind the fact we recently learned that, since WWII at least, **Republican administrations have administrated over twice the national debt increase as Democrats!** And they call the President a big-spending socialist!

Republicans come into office without a plan other than to slash and burn, because they see government as a wasteful and inefficient beast. They want to spend googles of dollars on defense because they are afraid to conceive of any other, perhaps saner, plan. After 40 years or so of their radical tax slashing, deregulating, free trade, laissez-faire policies, the country is weakened, perhaps stumbling...

Yet they repeat: "TAXES & WASTEFUL 'ENTITLEMENT' (read: insurance) PROGRAMS MUST BE SLASHED. CAPITALISM MUST RULE. GOVERNMENT IS BAD. NOT BEING RICH IS BAD. MANY OF YOU ARE BAD AND BELONG IN PRISON. OH, AND LETS SPEND \$GOOGLES ON DEFENSE, POLICE, DRONES, AND THE WARS ON DRUGS, WOMEN, MINORITIES, SMALL BUSINESS, THE POOR, THE MIDDLE CLASS, THE WORLD EXCEPT FOR ISRAEL, ALL HAIL!"

What simple policy for a complex world. Everything reduced to a formula so simple that an idiot like Palin or R0mney can mouth it and think they know something.

And all this is why Mitt R0mney gets my vote!

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| <a href="#">20120912-08</a> | 11:32 | Pam | Re: Two Kinds of People (reply to SteveB, above) |
|-----------------------------|-------|-----|--|

Wait a minute. I love what you say here, and you say it very well, but that last sentence trips me up. Surely, you jest. For a time I considered casting my vote for the green candidate; I agree with her about most everything, and if I were true to my principles, I'd do just that. But standing firm for my principles when that could mean giving the election to the wrong side is a futile gesture. Better the lesser of two evils, if that's how you think of it, than opting out of the real choice that has to be made.

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| <a href="#">20120912-11</a> | 12:29 | SteveB | Re: Two Kinds of People (reply to Pam, above) |
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YES! YES! JESTING! JESTING! (See...they do need that "sarcasm font" or an "irony font"! I wonder how that would work...?)

Maybe you could just do, like, stage directions:

(with irony) And all this is why Mitt R0mney gets my vote!

Maybe the effect is not exactly the same, but I certainly didn't achieve what I was after my way either.

20120912-13 12:46 Pam Re: Two Kinds of People (reply to SteveB, above)

I thought everything you said was great. I did get the irony--sort of--but I wanted to make sure. It did make me think about the wisdom of voting for an attractive but impossible candidate. "Sending a message" doesn't seem like enough of a reason to me. I understand people's frustration, and I seriously thought about voting green for a day, but an empty gesture isn't worth making. :-)

20120912-14 12:59 SteveB Re: Two Kinds of People (reply to Pam, above)

I think I want to see both of those little parties do well...maybe the Republicans could split up, given another embarrassing defeat at the hands of a black man.

What a vacuum! Mitt's not exactly a traditional party leader.

Also, I read where they think the little parties will take more votes from R0mney.

20120912-15 13:21 Pam Re: Two Kinds of People (reply to SteveB, above)

You may be right, I don't know. Who ARE you going to vote for? If you don't mind my asking...

20120912-23 15:17 SteveB Re: Two Kinds of People (reply to Pam, above)

R0mney.

20120912-25 15:37 Pam Re: Two Kinds of People (reply to SteveB, above)

Oh, stop it! ;-)

20120912-01 08:11 SandyI "Joining the Reality-Based Community; Or How I Learned to Stop Loving the Bombs and Start Worrying"

Those of us with Progressive tendencies often ask "do they (Conservatives) really believe that?" and/or "How can they believe that"? This is a great article of one man's journey in changing his world view. It is worth the read and time well spent. If you understand "the other", you can better work to counteract those beliefs to work for a more just society.

"Joining the Reality-Based Community; Or How I Learned to Stop Loving the Bombs and Start Worrying" by Jeremiah Goulka, Hiffington Post/TomDispatch

Sept. 10, 2012, ([http://www.huffingtonpost.com/jeremiah-goulka/ex-republican\\_b\\_1870534.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/jeremiah-goulka/ex-republican_b_1870534.html))

I used to be a serious Republican, moderate and business-oriented, who planned for a public-service career in Republican politics. But I am a Republican no longer.

There's an old joke we Republicans used to tell that goes something like this: "If you're young and not a Democrat, you're heartless. If you grow up and you're not a Republican, you're stupid." These days, my old friends and associates no doubt consider me the butt of that joke. But I look on my "stupidity" somewhat differently. After all, my real education only began when I was 30 years old.

This is the story of how in New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina and later in Iraq, I discovered that what I believed to be the full spectrum of reality was just a small slice of it and how that discovery knocked down my Republican worldview.

I always imagined that I was full of heart, but it turned out that I was oblivious. Like so many Republicans, I had assumed that society's "losers" had somehow earned their desserts. As I came to recognize that poverty is not earned or chosen or deserved, and that our use of force is far less precise than I had believed, I realized with a shock that I had effectively viewed whole swaths of the country and the world as second-class people.

No longer oblivious, I couldn't remain in today's Republican Party, not unless I embraced an individualism that was even more heartless than the one I had previously accepted. The more I learned about reality, the more I started to care about people as people, and my values shifted. Had I always known what I know today, it would have been clear that there hasn't been a place for me in the Republican Party since the Free Soil days of Abe Lincoln.

### Where I Came From

I grew up in a rich, white suburb north of Chicago populated by moderate, business-oriented Republicans. Once upon a time, we would have been called Rockefeller Republicans. Today we would be called liberal Republicans or slurred by the Right as "Republicans In Name Only" (RINOs).

We believed in competition and the free market, in bootstraps and personal responsibility, in equality of opportunity, not outcomes. We were financial conservatives who wanted less government. We believed in noblesse oblige, for we saw ourselves as part of a natural aristocracy, even if we hadn't been born into it. We sided with management over labor and saw unions as a scourge. We hated racism and loved Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., particularly his dream that his children would "live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character." We worried about the rise of the Religious Right and its social-conservative litmus tests. We were tough on crime, tough on national enemies. We believed in business, full stop.

I intended to run for office on just such a platform someday. In the meantime, I founded the Republican club at my high school, knocked on doors and collected signatures with my father, volunteered on campaigns, socialized at fundraisers, and interned for Senator John McCain and Congressman Denny Hastert when he was House Majority Whip Tom DeLay's chief deputy.

We went to mainstream colleges -- the more elite the better -- but lamented their domination by liberal professors, and I did my best to tune out their liberal views. I joined the Republican clubs and the Federalist Society, and I read the Wall Street Journal and the Economist rather than the New York Times. George Will was a voice in the wilderness, Rush Limbaugh an occasional (sometimes guilty) pleasure.

### Left Behind by the Party

In January 2001, I was one of thousands of Americans who braved the cold rain to attend and cheer George W. Bush's inauguration. After eight years hating "Slick Willie," it felt good to have a Republican back in the White House. But I knew that he wasn't one of our guys. We had been McCain fans, and even if we liked the compassionate bit of Bush's conservatism, we didn't care for his religiosity or his social politics.

Bush won a lot of us over with his hawkish response to 9/11, but he lost me with the Iraq War. Weren't we still busy in Afghanistan? I didn't see the urgency.

By then, I was at the Justice Department, working in an office that handled litigation related to what was officially called the Global War on Terror (or GWOT). My office was tasked with opposing petitions for habeas corpus

brought by Guantánamo detainees who claimed that they were being held indefinitely without charge. The government's position struck me as an abdication of a core Republican value: protecting the "procedural" rights found in the Bill of Rights. Sure, habeas corpus had been waived in wartime before, but it seemed to me that waiving it here reduced us to the terrorists' level. Besides, since acts of terrorism were crimes, why not prosecute them? I refused to work on those cases.

With the Abu Ghraib pictures, my disappointment turned to rage. The America I believed in didn't torture people.

I couldn't avoid GWOT work. I was forced to read reams of allegations of torture, sexual abuse, and cover-ups in our war zones to give the White House a heads-up in case any of made it into the news cycle.

I was so mad that I voted for Kerry out of spite.

### How I Learned to Start Worrying

I might still have stuck it out as a frustrated liberal Republican, knowing that the wealthy business core of the party still pulled a few strings and people like Richard Lugar and Olympia Snowe remained in the Senate -- if only because the idea of voting for Democrats by choice made me feel uncomfortable. (It would have been so... gauche.) Then came Hurricane Katrina. In New Orleans, I learned that it wasn't just the Bush administration that was flawed but my worldview itself.

I had fallen in love with New Orleans during a post-law-school year spent in Louisiana clerking for a federal judge, and the Bush administration's callous (non-)response to the storm broke my heart. I wanted to help out, but I didn't fly helicopters or know how to do anything useful in a disaster, so just I sat glued to the coverage and fumed -- until FEMA asked federal employees to volunteer to help. I jumped at the chance.

Soon, I was involved with a task force trying to rebuild (and reform) the city's criminal justice system. Growing up hating racism, I was appalled but not very surprised to find overt racism and the obvious use of racist code words by officials in the Deep South.

Then something tiny happened that pried open my eyes to the less obvious forms of racism and the hurdles the poor face when they try to climb the economic ladder. It happened on an official visit to a school in a suburb of New Orleans that served kids who had gotten kicked out of every other school around. I was investigating what types of services were available to the young people who were showing up in juvenile hall and seemed to be headed toward the proverbial life of crime.

My tour guide mentioned that parents were required to participate in some school programs. One of these was a field trip to a sit-down restaurant.

This stopped me in my tracks. I thought: What kind of a lame field trip is that?

It turned out that none of the families had ever been to a sit-down restaurant before. The teachers had to instruct parents and students alike how to order off a menu, how to calculate the tip.

I was stunned.

### Starting to See

That night, I told my roommates about the crazy thing I had heard that day. Apparently there were people out there who had never been to something as basic as a real restaurant. Who knew?

One of my roommates wasn't surprised. He worked at a local bank branch that required two forms of ID to open an account. Lots of people came in who had only one or none at all.

I was flooded with questions: There are adults who have no ID? And no bank accounts? Who are these people? How do they vote? How do they live? Is there an entire off-the-grid alternate universe out there?

From then on, I started to notice a lot more reality. I noticed that the criminal justice system treats minorities differently in subtle as well as not-so-subtle ways, and that many of the people who were getting swept up by the system came from this underclass that I knew so little about. Lingered for months in lock-up for misdemeanors, getting pressed against the hood and frisked during routine traffic stops, being pulled over in white neighborhoods for "driving while black": these are things that never happen to people in my world. Not having experienced it, I had always assumed that government force was only used against guilty people. (Maybe that's why we middle-class white people collectively freak out at TSA airport pat-downs.)

I dove into the research literature to try to figure out what was going on. It turned out that everything I was "discovering" had been hiding in plain sight and had been named: aversive racism, institutional racism, disparate impact and disparate treatment, structural poverty, neighborhood redlining, the "trial tax," the "poverty tax," and on and on. Having grown up obsessed with race (welfare and affirmative action were our bêtes noires), I wondered why I had never heard of any of these concepts.

Was it to protect our Republican version of "individual responsibility"? That notion is fundamental to the liberal Republican worldview. "Bootstrapping" and "equality of opportunity, not outcomes" make perfect sense if you assume, as I did, that people who hadn't risen into my world simply hadn't worked hard enough, or wanted it badly enough, or had simply failed. But I had assumed that bootstrapping required about as much as it took to get yourself promoted from junior varsity to varsity. It turns out that it's more like pulling yourself up from tee-ball to the World Series. Sure, some people do it, but they're the exceptions, the outliers, the Olympians.

The enormity of the advantages I had always enjoyed started to truly sink in. Everyone begins life thinking that his or her normal is the normal. For the first time, I found myself paying attention to broken eggs rather than making omelets. Up until then, I hadn't really seen most Americans as living, breathing, thinking, feeling, hoping, loving, dreaming, hurting people. My values shifted -- from an individualistic celebration of success (that involved dividing the world into the morally deserving and the undeserving) to an interest in people as people.

### How I Learned to Stop Loving the Bombs

In order to learn more -- and to secure my membership in what Karl Rove sneeringly called the "reality-based community" -- I joined a social science research institute. There I was slowly disabused of layer after layer of myth and received wisdom, and it hurt. Perhaps nothing hurt more than to see just how far my patriotic, Republican conception of U.S. martial power -- what it's for, how it's used -- diverged from the reality of our wars.

Lots of Republicans grow up hawks. I certainly did. My sense of what it meant to be an American was linked to my belief that from 1776 to WWII, and even from the 1991 Gulf War to Kosovo and Afghanistan, the American military had been dedicated to birthing freedom and democracy in the world, while dispensing a tough and precise global justice.

To me, military service represented the perfect combination of public service, honor, heroism, glory, promotion, meaning, and coolness. As a child, I couldn't get enough of the military: toys and models, movies and cartoons, fat books with technical pictures of manly fighter planes and ships and submarines. We went to air shows whenever we could, and with the advent of cable, I begged my parents to sign up so that the Discovery Channel could bring those shows right into our den. Just after we got it, the first Gulf War kicked off, and CNN provided my afterschool entertainment for weeks.

As I got older, I studied Civil War military history and memory. (I would eventually edit a book of letters by Union Gen. Joshua Lawrence Chamberlain.) I thought I knew a lot about war; even if Sherman was right that "war is hell," it was frequently necessary, we did it well, and -- whatever those misinformed peaceniks said -- we made the world a better place.

But then I went to a war zone.

I was deployed to Baghdad as part of a team of RAND Corporation researchers to help the detainee operations command figure out several thorny policy issues. My task was to figure out why we were sort-of-protecting and sort-of-detaining an Iranian dissident group on Washington's terrorist list.

It got ugly fast. Just after my first meal on base, there was a rumble of explosions, and an alarm started screaming INCOMING! INCOMING! INCOMING! Two people were killed and dozens injured, right outside the chow hall where I had been standing minutes earlier.

This was the "surge" period in 2007 when, I was told, insurgent attacks came less frequently than before, but the sounds of war seemed constant to me. The rat-tat-tat of small arms fire just across the "wire." Controlled detonations of insurgent duds. Dual patrolling Blackhawks overhead. And every few mornings, a fresh rain of insurgent rockets and mortars.

Always alert, always nervous, I was only in Iraq for three and a half weeks, and never close to actual combat; and yet the experience gave me many of the symptoms of PTSD. It turns out that it doesn't take much.

That made me wonder how the Iraqis took it. From overhead I saw that the once teeming city of Baghdad was now a desert of desolate neighborhoods and empty shopping streets, bomb craters in the middle of soccer fields and in the roofs of schools. Millions displaced.

Our nation-building efforts reeked of post-Katrina organizational incompetence. People were assigned the wrong roles -- "Why am I building a radio station? This isn't what I do. I blow things up..." -- and given no advance training or guidance. Outgoing leaders didn't overlap with their successors, so what they had learned would be lost, leaving each wheel to be partially reinvented again. Precious few contracts went to Iraqis. It was driving people out of our military.

This incompetence had profound human costs. Of the 26,000 people we were detaining in Iraq, as many as two-thirds were innocent -- wrong place, wrong time -- or, poor and desperate, had worked with insurgent groups for cash, not out of an ideological commitment. Aware of this, the military wanted to release thousands of them, but they didn't know who was who; they only knew that being detained and interrogated made even the innocents dangerously angry. That anger trickled down to family, friends, neighbors, and acquaintances. It was about as good an in-kind donation as the U.S. could have made to insurgent recruitment -- aside from invading in the first place.

So much for surgical precision and winning hearts and minds. I had grown up believing that we were more careful in our use of force, that we only punished those who deserved punishment. But in just a few weeks in Iraq, it became apparent that what we were doing to the Iraqis, as well as to our own people, was inexcusable.

Today, I wonder if Mitt Romney drones on about not apologizing for America because he, like the former version of me, simply isn't aware of the U.S. ever doing anything that might demand an apology. Then again, no one wants to feel like a bad person, and there's no need to apologize if you are oblivious to the harms done in your name -- calling the occasional ones you notice collateral damage ("stuff happens") -- or if you believe that American force is always applied righteously in a world that is justly divided into winners and losers.

### A Painful Transition

An old saw has it that no one profits from talking about politics or religion. I think I finally understand what it means. We see different realities, different worlds. If you and I take in different slices of reality, chances are that we aren't talking about the same things. I think this explains much of modern American political dialogue.

My old Republican worldview was flawed because it was based upon a small and particularly rosy sliver of reality. To preserve that worldview, I had to believe that people had morally earned their "just" desserts, and I had to ignore those whining liberals who tried to point out that the world didn't actually work that way. I think this shows why Republicans put so much effort into "creat[ing] our own reality," into fostering distrust of liberals, experts, scientists, and academics, and why they won't let a campaign "be dictated by fact-checkers" (as a Romney pollster put it). It explains why study after study shows -- examples here, here, and here -- that avid consumers of

Republican-oriented media are more poorly informed than people who use other news sources or don't bother to follow the news at all.

Waking up to a fuller spectrum of reality has proved long and painful. I had to question all my assumptions, unlearn so much of what I had learned. I came to understand why we Republicans thought people on the Left always seemed to be screeching angrily (because we refused to open our eyes to the damage we caused or blamed the victims) and why they never seemed to have any solutions to offer (because those weren't mentioned in the media we read or watched).

My transition has significantly strained my relationships with family, friends, and former colleagues. It is deeply upsetting to walk on thin ice where there used to be solid, common ground. I wish they, too, would come to see a fuller spectrum of reality, but I know from experience how hard that can be when your worldview won't let you.

No one wants to feel like a dupe. It is embarrassing to come out in public and admit that I was so miseducated when so much reality is out there in plain sight in neighborhoods I avoided, in journals I hadn't heard of, in books by authors I had refused to read. (So I take courage from the people who have done so before me like Andrew Bacevich.)

Many people see the wider spectrum of reality because they grew up on the receiving end. As a retired African-American general in the Marine Corps said to me after I told him my story, "No one has to explain institutional racism to a black man."

Others do because they grew up in families that simply got it. I married a woman who grew up in such a family, for whom all of my hard-earned, painful "discoveries" are old news. Each time I pull another layer of wool off my eyes and feel another surge of anger, she gives me a predictable series of looks. The first one more or less says, "Duh, obviously." The second is sympathetic, a recognition of the pain that comes with dismantling my flawed worldview. The third is concerned: "Do people actually think that?"

Yes, they do.

20120912-02 08:57 Pam Re: "Joining the Reality-Based Community..." (reply to SandyI, above)

This is a great essay and well worth the time to read it.

20120912-34 18:29 SteveB Re: "Joining the Reality-Based Community..." (reply to SandyI, above)

A really incredible article, I think Sandy. If read, it seems possible that it could open some eyes.

...my old Zen teacher and his longest journey beginning with the first step...

Thanks for this!

20120912-03 10:08 Pam Re: Friends of the Middle: Past, Present, Future (reply to SteveB, FotM Newsletter #224)

I have an idea, SteveB. How about producing a hard copy, ie. book, and selling it for cost to subscribers, readers, and writers who have contributed? This is such an amazing feat, and I, for one, would like to have something tangible I could keep and refer to. You have done so much and made this incredible thing happen, I don't think "Thank you" even comes close to being enough recompense for you. I haven't clicked on all the covers yet, but I went back and clicked on the first one, 2007-2011. I thought your introduction was amazing. I, too, have learned so much and will be forever grateful.

[20120912-04](#) 10:51 Bill Re: "FDR's Policies Prolonged Depression by 7 years, UCLA Economists Calculate" (reply to SteveG, FotM Newsletter #224)

I doubt there are "fact checks" on the essence of this, which is theory. Could be true or could be contributive in part—or could be hoo-hah.

[20120912-07](#) 11:27 Pam Re: "FDR's Policies Prolonged Depression by 7 years, UCLA Economists Calculate" (reply to Bill, above)

This is interesting, and for all I know it's basically true, but it strikes me that the conditions and remedies then and now, are not entirely comparable. I'm neither a historian nor an economist, but I think I have a pretty good grasp of what happened to us in 2008. What Roosevelt faced was something unique, and he had to scramble to figure out what to do—which is exactly what he did. His approach was to try something, and if it didn't work, try something else, but at least he tried to do something. Furthermore, I believe he had the best interests of the country at heart, not his own political agenda or personal fortune. He inevitably made some mistakes. He tried to pack the Supreme Court, and he was less than forthcoming about our aid to Britain in the late 'thirties, but he had good reasons. The present always has a difficult task: how to learn from the past without repeating it and how to judge the past with the advantage of hindsight. No one is suggesting that the methods of the recovery from the Great Depression would work today. In the absence of absolute empirical proof (unless you count what happened during the Clinton and Bush years, which I do), we must rely mostly on common sense and logic. Ideology and partisanship lock us down and make it impossible to do anything. The fanatics always take over because they are willing to devote the time and energy to getting what they want. Unless you're a fanatic, you have other, better things to do.

It all seems rather simple to me: NAFTA impacted our trade balance and sent jobs overseas. Deregulation, tax cuts, and two unfunded wars drained monies from public goods and funneled wealth to the already rich and powerful. I used to defend labor unions come hell or high water. I think they were very necessary at one time to protect workers' rights and health, but I'm not so sure they can serve the same purpose today. Like health insurance companies, they can be obstructive middlemen who gum up the works. It's always important to follow the money. I'd like to know how a union officer's pay differs from a line worker's or a teacher's. I know school and university administrators make WAY more than faculties. My plan for education would include committees of elected teachers from the schools in question that would talk directly to the superintendents and principals of those schools about everything from discipline to curriculum to budget. I'd take a look at textbook publishing, where Texas conservatives seem to have a monopoly, at least in primary and secondary education. I'd question the number of administrators needed and I'd bring their salaries more in line with what teachers make. Same with CEOs and upper executives. Money is a magnet, and we need to loosen its hold on us. Too many of our decisions are made for financial reasons rather than for what would actually be best for our society. Americans decry European "socialism" and the perceived failures of the Canadian health system, but they ignore one crucial difference between those societies and ours: theirs by and large work for the benefit of the many and not the profit for the few. I don't want absolute equality, and I'm not against people having money, but when money is the ONLY basis for a given policy, then we are on a dangerous path. I keep coming back to this again and again, and in a way it's ironic, because for most of my adult life I lived on a very, very modest income that was not always sufficient to support three children. Hell, I LOVE money. I just think we need to be more reasonable about it.

[20120912-37](#) 18:57 SteveB Re: "FDR's Policies Prolonged Depression by 7 years, UCLA Economists Calculate" (reply to Pam, above)

As true and complete a summary of our present situation as I have read, Pam.

[20120912-06](#) 11:20 SteveM Re: "'Creepy'? Joe Biden Cuddles Up to Female Biker" (reply to SteveB, FotM Newsletter #224)

What did your vicious, uncalled for attack on the Palins and McCains have to do with Biden being creepy? Once again you can't defend the point, so you viciously change the subject with inflammatory comments. You're a jack a\*s, SteveB, seek professional help.

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| <a href="#">20120912-10</a> | 12:23 | SteveB | Re: ""Creepy"? Joe Biden Cuddles Up to Female Biker" (reply to SteveM, above) |
|-----------------------------|-------|--------|---|

You don't get it???

Both candidates seeking the votes of motorcycle gangs and acting, accordingly, silly??? You call that a "vicious, uncalled for attack"? You think I changed the subject? You don't get it? Maybe tomorrow's *FotM Newsletter* will clarify it all for you.

And let me give you a recommendation. Let's discuss one specific point. Scared?

I said my goal is to keep idiots out of government!

Take the time to read the article I just sent all of you (See: "Foreign Policy Hands Voice Disbelief at Romney Cairo Statement") and tell me exactly how it is that Mittens is not an idiot concerning his Cairo statements and position! To me, he's a traitor, pure and simple, unless "idiot" gets him off the hook. Even the Right is throwing its hands up in the air.

**YOU HAVE A LOT OF GODDAMNED NERVE TO TALK TO ME ABOUT PERSONAL ATTACKS THE WAY YOU HAVE DONE ABSOLUTELY NOTHING HERE, CONTRIBUTED NOTHING HERE EXCEPT ATTACKS UPON MR. OBAMA AND PERSONAL ATTACKS UPON ME.**

When have I called you a name? You call me "jack a\*s" (above), etc., daily!

And, by the way, for your information, to call a public figure or a politician a name or to criticize them is not at all the same, legally or socially, as your constant cowardly foul-mouthing of other equal America citizens (my group and I), when all we are trying to do is discuss politics in a friendly, respectful manner in the democracy that is America.

Do you know what I mean, my friend?

Have a nice day.

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| <a href="#">20120912-19</a> | 14:25 | Beth | Re: ""Creepy"? Joe Biden Cuddles Up to Female Biker" (reply to SteveB, above) |
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As I have said before, there is no point in wasting words on this guy.

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| <a href="#">20120912-20</a> | 14:56 | Art | Re: ""Creepy"? Joe Biden Cuddles Up to Female Biker" (reply to SteveB, above) |
|-----------------------------|-------|-----|---|

The interesting thing about the original article is, it is all just speculation by the author. Except for the "borrowing the bike" and "who runs the show" quotes the rest is all just a vicious attack on Vice President Biden in the author's mind. SteveM is blind with hate, I suspect because he is a total racist and beyond reasoning with. I have Golden's that demonstrate more cognitive reason than he has shown. Stop wasting your time.

I must also comment on Mary, in the last newsletter. She talks about the "Obama apology tour" and "bowing to the King of Saudi Arabia" and expects any thinking person to not see she is another blind with, probably racist's

hate, fundamentalist? I have lots of friends in the Arab world and elsewhere overseas and the only group I know who think either of those explanations is correct is the American right wing extremist party.

You cannot reason with a rabid dog.

20120912-22 15:17 Pam Re: "Creepy"? Joe Biden Cuddles Up to Female Biker" (reply to Art, above)

I just read the original article, and all the spelling and grammatical errors are the least of its horrors. You're right, Art. You can't argue with a rabid dog, and that's what people who call the president a "goon" are. I find it amazing that SteveM even wants to engage with this group, which is made up, so far as I can tell, of mostly intelligent, thoughtful people, whatever their political leanings. He just can't stop being vicious. I can only imagine what his home life must be like. Sad.

20120912-26 15:40 SteveB Re: "Creepy"? Joe Biden Cuddles Up to Female Biker" (reply to SteveM, above) & "Cindy McCain as Miss Buffalo Chip?"

Did you mention embarrassment? Actually I think it's OK if either party honors their constituencies, don't you?

Aug. 5, 2008 (from SteveB)

TODAY'S SENILE MOMENT (MISS BUFFALO CHIP):

John McCain nominates his visibly embarrassed wife, Cindy, to partake in the bikers' 2008 Sturgis, ND Miss Buffalo Chip Beauty Contest, where contestants wear tiny bikinis, maybe take them off or get them wet, and must lick/suck pickles while the audience fantasizes they're...

"Cindy McCain as Miss Buffalo Chip?" by Kate Phillips, *New York Times*

Aug. 5, 2008, (<http://thecaucus.blogs.nytimes.com/2008/08/05/cindy-mccain-as-miss-buffalo-chip/>)

(Sturgis, ND) John McCain nominates his visibly embarrassed wife, Cindy, to partake in the bikers' Miss Buffalo Chip Beauty Contest, where contestants must wear tiny bikinis, maybe take them off or get them wet, and eat bananas, pretending they're big penises.



AND, MCCAIN HAS TO DO THIS READING FROM A PREPARED SCRIPT!!!! Ya, this is the fool we need in the White House. OMG!

Video#1 (Go, Cindy!): <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DjtQGAtbe04>.

Video #2 (McCain pardoned): [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sNI\\_oDEQ4gk](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sNI_oDEQ4gk).

TODAY'S BONUS SENILE MOMENT:

McCain opposed more offshore drilling for oil (the right position, if you ask me) until just after he received a big campaign contribution from big oil in June. Then he flip-flopped. Gee, sure glad this politician can't be bought! Now, can he remember who bought him? LOL!

**20120912-30** 18:08 Tom Re: "Creepy"? Joe Biden Cuddles Up to Female Biker" (reply to all, above)

Hi, I'm more conservative than the "Liberal" Ron Reagans", GW Bushs, Mark Levins, Rushies, etc...

They are all "Liberal/ Progressives" in my Book! Now U know how I must feel.

I still can 'chat' w/o cuss'n & I still love U all.

**20120912-38** 20:14 SteveB Re: "Creepy"? Joe Biden Cuddles Up to Female Biker" (reply to Tom, above)

We love you too, Tom! Even tho you don't kno crap!

Just kidding about the last part. And more seriously, your point is very well taken and appreciated!

When people respect each other, or maybe just other, in general, they can differ greatly and still get along fine, I think. I had a wife like that once.

That being said...I have to admit that I kinda like pi\*sing people off sometimes! Though I'd rather make them THINK! Ya know?

I wonder if you're more conservative than I am, Tom? (I mean that question more seriously than you might think...I kinda come at the "progressive" positions from "the other side" sometimes...)

Poor abused Joe Biden!

20120912-09 12:05 SteveB "Foreign Policy Hands Voice Disbelief at Romney Cairo Statement"

**THIS MAN CAN SIMPLY *NOT* BE ALLOWED ANYWHERE NEAR THE FOREIGN POLICY MECHANISMS OF THE GOVERNMENT OF THESE GREAT UNITED STATES OF AMERICA!**

The man is an idiot and a traitor! OK, that is a little grandiose and Shakespearean, but that's the way I am. Let's just say he's dumb and maladroit!

Foot in mouth nearly daily now. And he honestly thinks he won't be annihilated in the debates? Oh, the danger to so many downticket Republicans if there's a big sweep at the top!

Yep! Now we know why he hasn't wanted to talk about foreign policy, and gee, his London trip really didn't go all that well did it?

"Foreign Policy Hands Voice Disbelief at Romney Cairo Statement" by Ben Smith, BuzzFeed

Sept. 12, 2012, (<http://www.buzzfeed.com/bensmith/foreign-policy-hands-voice-disbelief-at-romney-cai>)

"Bungle... utter disaster...not ready for prime time... not presidential... Lehman moment." And that's just the Republicans.

Mitt Romney's sharply-worded attack on President Obama over a pair of deadly riots in Muslim countries last night has backfired badly among foreign policy hands of both parties, who cast it as hasty and off-key, released before the facts were clear at what has become a moment of tragedy.

Romney keyed his statement to the American Embassy in Cairo's condemnation of an anti-Muslim video that served as the trigger for the latest in a series of regional riots over obscure perceived slights to the faith. But his statement — initially embargoed to avoid release on September 11, then released yesterday evening anyway — came just before news that the American Ambassador to Libya had been killed and broke with a tradition of unity around national tragedies, and of avoiding hasty statements on foreign policy. It was the second time Romney has been burned by an early statement on a complex crisis: Romney denounced the Obama Administration's handling of a Chinese dissident's escape just as the Administration negotiated behind the scenes for his departure from the country.

"They were just trying to score a cheap news cycle hit based on the embassy statement and now it's just completely blown up," said a very senior Republican foreign policy hand, who called the statement an "utter disaster" and a "Lehman moment" — a parallel to the moment when John McCain, amid the 2008 financial crisis, failed to come across as a steady leader.

He and other members of both parties cited the Romney campaign's recent dismissals of foreign policy's relevance. One adviser dismissed the subject to BuzzFeed as a "shiny object," while another told Politico that the subject was the "president's turf," drawing a rebuke from Weekly Standard editor Bill Kristol.

"I guess we see now that it is because they're incompetent at talking effectively about foreign policy," said the Republican. "This is just unbelievable — when they decide to play on it they completely bungle it."

Romney has not backed off the response — "It's never too early for the United States government to condemn attacks on Americans and to defend our values," he said Wednesday — but his campaign faces a near consensus in Republican foreign policy circles that, whatever the sentiment, Romney faltered badly.

"It's deeply unfortunate when the circumstance of the statement becomes the story," said Rick Perry's former foreign policy adviser, Victoria Coates, who is now an adjunct fellow at the Foundation for the Defense of Democracies, and who suggested that Romney should simply have "gone earlier rather than save it for midnight" to avoid appearing to play politics on September 11. "It's unfortunate that it's playing out this way, and hopefully they can get back on message, because their point is sound," she said.

Other conservatives were less sympathetic.

"It's bad," said a former aide to Senator John McCain's 2008 presidential campaign. "Just on a factual level that the statement was not a response but preceding, or one could make the case precipitating. And just calling it a 'disgrace' doesn't really cut it. Not ready for prime time."

A third Republican, a former Bush State Department official, told BuzzFeed, "It wasn't presidential of Romney to go political immediately — a tragedy of this magnitude should be something the nation collectively grieves before politics enters the conversation."

But the third official defended the substance of Romney's words: "Romney's attack is spot-on — disgusting that the first Obama administration impulse was to apologize instead of condemning violent religious intolerance. Obama's gotten a real pass on his intervention in Libya, his failed strategy in Afghanistan, and his lack of leadership in the aftermath of the Arab Spring. By trying to cut it down the middle in his foreign policy, no one knows where or for what Obama or America stands in the world these days."

The Republicans declined to speak for attribution, for fear of being publicly disloyal to their party's nominee. Veteran Democratic foreign policy hands, operating under no such restriction, called Romney's quick move all but disqualifying.

"He did jump the gun. It revealed yet again that his foreign policy team is not ready for prime time," said David Rothkopf, a former Clinton State Department official. "It is ugly and amateurish. It also seems strangely out of character with Romney who elsewhere in the campaign seems inclined to be restrained to a fault."

Heather Hurlburt, who heads the National Security Network, a Democratic group, said the statement "shows not just poor judgment and a willingness to use tragedy for political gains, regardless of the security consequences — but also poor management. He has policy people on his team who know better. Clearly they weren't consulted."

"As someone who worked at state and with diplomats for many years, it makes me feel sick," she said.

"Romney blew it and revealed how seriously maladroit he is when it comes to foreign affairs and national security," said Steve Clemons, the founder of the American Strategy Program at the New America Foundation. "An attack on an Embassy, the murder of U.S. officials including an Ambassador, is an attack on all Americans and the idea of America — and Romney gave terrorists what they want — a divided country still torn emotionally and politically by the events of 9-11. Romney talks of leadership, but with his reckless commentary when events were fragile and still unfolding, he belly-flopped."

[20120912-16](#)

13:26

Clark

Re: "Foreign Policy Hands Voice Disbelief at Romney Cairo Statement"  
(reply to SteveB, above)

Romney is utterly incompetent and craven. If he's elected, the entire world will pay for it after he blunders us into war(s). And what a liar. What suckers he takes us for. He's the disgrace.

[20120912-17](#) 13:33 Pam Re: "Foreign Policy Hands Voice Disbelief at Romney Cairo Statement" (reply to Clark & SteveB, above)

Why, why, why do so many people say they'll vote for him? How can they not see the danger he would expose us to? I'm baffled.

[20120912-21](#) 15:06 Art Re: "Foreign Policy Hands Voice Disbelief at Romney Cairo Statement" (reply to Pam, above)

I keep telling you, racism and intolerant Christian fundamentalism.

[20120912-24](#) 15:34 Pam Re: "Foreign Policy Hands Voice Disbelief at Romney Cairo Statement" (reply to Art, above)

I know, but how does a person absorb those attitudes? It's got to be more than just parental influence. My guess is that such folks lack empathy, which is the foundation of morality. People who lack empathy are sociopaths. Are all these fanatics sociopaths? Somehow that seems unlikely, so there has to be still more to it than just a lack of fellow feeling. Some folks just hate it when someone else has more than they do, especially if it's something they want themselves, like a big house or an expensive car. De Toqueville said one of the faults of democracy is its tendency toward envy. With envy, you look up and feel deprived. With empathy, you look down and think, there but for the grace of god go I, and compassion follows. Some observe a poor, struggling family and see lazy layabouts; others see that same family as human beings with bad luck that could befall anyone. Same poor family; completely different interpretations. Is this difference inborn? We don't all blindly ape our parents. We are free to choose how we wish to live--with anger and bitterness or with humility and compassion. I guess no one knows what evil lurks in the hearts of man. Oh, yeah. The Shadow knows.

[20120912-29](#) 18:04 Art Re: "Foreign Policy Hands Voice Disbelief at Romney Cairo Statement" (reply to Pam, above)

One thing that stuck in my mind in one of my early studies of American colonial history was on slavery. Although we had white indentured servants and later poor white trash, all at the very bottom of the American social ladder, the one thing they could all feel good about was they were still better than any ni\*\*er. The Civil War kind of threw that off a bit but society quickly got back on track with the Jim Crow laws. Even after the Civil Rights Act, I think most whites felt we were just being kind to an inferior people and kindly allowing them to think they were equal when they really weren't. Colleges wanted them to play football and basketball but really they were more like gladiators, entertaining but not really one of us, Then along comes Barack Obama, well educated. well spoken, a good family man and again very, very smart. This throws everything off. We can't have a ni\*\*er being actually equal, no worse, maybe even smarter and a better person than we are!!!! Result, the tea party.

I know I beat on this theme but one thing I have learned when you have a serious disagreement is you have to get to the real heart of the disagreement, if you are ever to work your way forward. Most of what we see in public is arguing about peripherals and never getting to the real source of the disagreement.

Just my opinion.

[20120912-31](#) 18:20 SteveG Re: "Foreign Policy Hands Voice Disbelief at Romney Cairo Statement" (reply to Art, above)

A black friend has said in regards to the 2008 election is that America is not ready for a black president. Hate and racism, as Art states, are reasonable and seem to be the only logical explanation.

[20120912-32](#) 18:23 SteveB Re: "Foreign Policy Hands Voice Disbelief at Romney Cairo Statement" (reply to Art, above)

I think you're right, Art. The racism is rampant! And in traditional Republican style, that's exactly why they like to accuse us of being (reverse) racists!

That's sort of what the President is being accused of with R0mney's lies about the Libya/Cairo situations, isn't it? The accusation is that he sides with Muslim extremists over American free speech.

Reverse racism (except that being black...???). If it were white me, it would be reverse, for sure. I don't know. Rush has me so cornfused!

But—to change the subject—though I really regret that we weren't better prepared for trouble and that good people died, for R0mney to try to make political hay out of it (and lying political hay, at that!) just shows what a low-life racist creep he really is.

Gee, hope I didn't offend anybody by personally attacking a politician! (Who is, I guess, too sensitive to be fair game. Then why is he running? I think he wishes he weren't!)

[20120912-35](#) 18:36 SteveG Re: "Foreign Policy Hands Voice Disbelief at Romney Cairo Statement" (reply to SteveB, above)

Some people thought Obama wasn't black enough since his mother was white and that his father was a Kenyan and not a true African-American and then through research it has been determined that one of Obama's relatives on his mother's side was one of the first slaves, so maybe he is black enough. On the other hand he is related to the Bush family and I believe 6 different presidents of the US – does that make him white enough? The guy can't win.

[20120912-36](#) 18:39 Art Re: "Foreign Policy Hands Voice Disbelief at Romney Cairo Statement" (reply to SteveB, above)

Well as probably the only member of this group to have spent time in Libya, I can tell you that there is not much you can do. When I was there in Tripoli a few years ago, a boy scout troop or even a NRA platoon could have easily over run the Embassy in a few minutes. Our people are very vulnerable in the small start up embassies or consulates.

Very sad. Romney is just proving again to be the ass we all thought he was. All he cares about is himself and getting elected. Little people, like the Ambassador, are all from the expendable class.

[20120912-12](#) 12:43 SteveB "A 'Lost Decade' for the Middle Class Caused by Conservative Policies"

"A 'Lost Decade' for the Middle Class Caused by Conservative Policies" by Isaiah J. Poole, [NationofChange](#)

Sept. 12, 2012, (<http://www.nationofchange.org/lost-decade-middle-class-caused-conservative-policies-1347456685>)

The latest edition of the Economic Policy Institute's "State of Working America" report, out today, documents in sharp detail what has been for the middle-class economy a "lost decade" in which working people have fallen behind. But what's more disheartening is its prediction that without radical change "nearly two decades likely will pass before American incomes regain lost ground and return to their 2000 levels."

The report makes clear what has been robbed from low- and middle-income people as a result of conservative policies that have their roots in the early 1980s, as the country turned from balanced growth policies in which labor

and capital profited more or less in tandem to government policies that advantaged corporations and the wealthy at the expense of workers.

As a result of these policies, the report notes, "the business cycle preceding the recession [of 2008-2009] was already shaping up as a lost decade for American incomes," with median household incomes falling 6 percent during that period. But when the Great Recession hit, median income of working-age families fell another 7.1 percent between 2007 and 2010.

"This is an underappreciated economic calamity," the report says.

The report notes that this calamity is not caused by a lack of overall economic growth. National income, the report notes, has grown enough to substantially improve the fortunes for all. As the data reveal, however, it is the top 5 percent, the top 1 percent, and fractions of the top 1 percent that have received almost all the benefits of the economy's growth.

"Incomes for the middle fifth of American households—the heart of the middle class—would have been an average of \$19,000 higher per year by 2007 if the share of growth claimed by the richest households had not grown so much over the past 30 years. Likewise, wealth for the typical American family would have been \$62,000 higher in 2010 had the growth in wealth over these same years not been overwhelmingly claimed by families at the very top," according to the report.

This is not the result of forces beyond the control of policy makers. "Policy decisions made over the last several decades have caused this explosive rise in inequality. These decisions include: lowering individual and corporate tax rates; deregulating industries; failing to maintain the value of the minimum wage; failing to protect the right of workers to obtain collective bargaining; and failing to prevent asset bubbles."

This lays the blame at the feet of conservative ideology that has not only guided Republican administrations but has limited, and sometimes influenced, the actions of Democratic administrations. It is no surprise that during this presidential election campaign conservatives are blaming the Obama administration for failing to reverse these trends.

It was president Ronald Reagan and the conservatives who placed him in the vanguard of their movement who laid the foundation of the middle-class lost decade, and George W. Bush who embellished the modern structure built on that foundation with tax cuts, deregulation and an attack on unions. Their policies have been an unmitigated disaster for working people, and the conservative response to this failure, as Paul Krugman so eloquently pointed out Monday, has been, "First, obstruct any and all efforts to strengthen the economy, then exploit the economy's weakness for political gain. If this strategy sounds cynical, that's because it is. Yet it's the G.O.P.'s best chance for victory in November."

Breaking the back of that strategy with hard facts and and a solid critique of what has really happened to the middle-class economy the past 30 years is critical, and that is why this year's release of "The State of Working America" is so important.

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|-------------|-------|--------|--|
| 20120912-18 | 14:00 | SteveB | "How the American University Was Killed, in Five Easy Steps" |
|-------------|-------|--------|--|

"How the American University Was Killed, in Five Easy Steps" by Debra Leigh Scott, OpEdNews

Aug. 19, 2012, (<http://www.opednews.com/articles/How-The-American-Universit-by-Debra-Leigh-Scott-120819-373.html>)

The people who act to make change happen-- to protect the environment, regulate corporations, protect the vulnerable-- are educated at universities... So, of course, the corporations that see educational institutions as the enemy are doing what they can to hurt or destroy them.

A few years back, Paul E. Lingenfelter began his report on the defunding of public education by saying, "In 1920 H.G. Wells wrote, 'History is becoming more and more a race between education and catastrophe.' I think he got it right. Nothing is more important to the future of the United States and the world than the breadth and effectiveness of education, especially of higher education. I say especially higher education, but not because pre-school, elementary, and secondary education are less important. Success at every level of education obviously depends on what has gone before. But for better or worse, the quality of postsecondary education and research affects the quality and effectiveness of education at every level."

In the last few years, conversations have been growing like gathering storm clouds about the ways in which our universities are failing. There is talk about the poor educational outcomes apparent in our graduates, the out-of-control tuitions and crippling student loan debt. Attention is finally being paid to the enormous salaries for presidents and sports coaches, and the migrant worker status of the low-wage majority faculty. There are now movements to control tuition, to forgive student debt, to create more powerful "assessment" tools, to offer "free" university materials online, to combat adjunct faculty exploitation. But each of these movements focuses on a narrow aspect of a much wider problem, and no amount of "fix" for these aspects individually will address the real reason that universities in America are dying.

To explain my perspective here, I need to go back in time. Let's go back to post World War II, 1950s when the GI bill, and the affordability -- and sometimes free access -- to universities created an upsurge of college students across the country. This surge continued through the '60s, when universities were the very heart of intense public discourse, passionate learning, and vocal citizen involvement in the issues of the times.

It was during this time, too, when colleges had a thriving professoriate, and when students were given access to a variety of subject areas, and the possibility of broad learning. The Liberal Arts stood at the center of a college education, and students were exposed to philosophy, anthropology, literature, history, sociology, world religions, foreign languages and cultures. Of course, something else happened, beginning in the late fifties into the sixties -- the uprisings and growing numbers of citizens taking part in popular dissent -- against the Vietnam War, against racism, against destruction of the environment in a growing corporatized culture, against misogyny, against homophobia. Where did much of that revolt incubate? Where did large numbers of well-educated, intellectual, and vocal people congregate? On college campuses. Who didn't like the outcome of the 60s? The corporations, the war-mongers, those in our society who would keep us divided based on our race, our gender, our sexual orientation.

I suspect that, given the opportunity, those groups would have liked nothing more than to shut down the universities. Destroy them outright. But a country claiming to have democratic values can't just shut down its universities. That would reveal something about that country which would not support the image they are determined to portray -- that of a country of freedom, justice, opportunity for all. So, how do you kill the universities of the country without showing your hand?

As a child growing up during the Cold War, I was taught that the communist countries in the first half of the 20th Century put their scholars, intellectuals and artists into prison camps, called "re-education camps". What I've come to realize as an adult is that American corporatism despises those same individuals as much as we were told communism did. But instead of doing anything so obvious as throwing them into prison, here those same people are thrown into dire poverty. The outcome is the same. Desperate poverty controls and ultimately breaks people as effectively as prison" ..and some research says that it works even MORE powerfully.

So: here is the recipe for killing universities, and you tell ME if what I'm describing isn't exactly what is at the root of all the problems of our country's system of higher education. (Because what I'm saying has more recently been applied to K-12 public education as well.)

#### First, you defund public higher education

Anna Victoria, writing in Pluck Magazine, discusses this issue in a review of Christopher Newfield's book, *Unmaking the Public University*: "In 1971, Lewis Powell (before assuming his post as a Supreme Court Justice) authored a memo, now known as the Powell Memorandum, and sent it to the U.S. Chamber of Commerce. The title of the memo was "Attack on the American Free Enterprise System," and in it he called on corporate America to take an increased role in shaping politics, law, and education in the United States."

How would they do that? One, by increased lobbying and pressure on legislators to change their priorities. "Funding for public universities comes from, as the term suggests, the state and federal government. Yet starting in the early 1980s, shifting state priorities forced public universities to increasingly rely on other sources of revenue. For example, in the University of Washington school system, state funding for schools decreased as a percentage of total public education budgets from 82% in 1989 to 51% in 2011." That's a loss of more than 1/3 of its public funding. But why this shift in priorities?

U.C. Berkeley English professor, Christopher Newfield, in his new book *Unmaking the Public University* posits that conservative elites have worked to de-fund higher education explicitly because of its function in creating a more empowered, democratic, and multiracial middle class. His theory is one that blames explicit cultural concern, not financial woes, for the current decreases in funding. He cites the fact that California public universities were forced to reject 300,000 applicants because of lack of funding. Newfield explains that much of the motive behind conservative advocacy for de-funding of public education is racial, pro-corporate, and anti-protest in nature.

Again, from Victoria: "(The) ultimate objective, as outlined in the (Lewis Powell) memo, was to purge respectable institutions such as the media, arts, sciences, as well as college campus themselves of left-wing thoughts. At the time, college campuses were seen as "springboards for dissent," as Newfield terms it, and were therefore viewed as publicly funded sources of opposition to the interests of the establishment. While it is impossible to know the extent to which this memo influenced the conservative political strategy over the coming decades, it is extraordinary to see how far the principles outlined in his memo have been adopted."

Under the guise of many "conflicts", such as budget struggles, or quotas, de-funding was consistently the result. This funding argument also was used to re-shape the kind of course offerings and curriculum focus found on campuses. Victoria writes, "Attacks on humanities curriculums, political correctness, and affirmative action shifted the conversation on public universities to the right, creating a climate of skepticism around state funded schools.

State budget debates became platforms for conservatives to argue why certain disciplines such as sociology, history, anthropology, minority studies, language, and gender studies should be de-funded"" on one hand, through the argument that they were not offering students the "practical" skills needed for the job market -- which was a powerful way to increase emphasis on what now is seen as vocational focus rather than actual higher education, and to de-value those very courses that trained and expanded the mind, developed a more complete human being, a more actively intelligent person and involved citizen.

Another argument used to attack the humanities was ""their so-called promotion of anti-establishment sentiment. Gradually, these arguments translated into real- and often deep- cuts into the budgets of state university systems," especially in those most undesirable areas that the establishment found to run counter to their ability to control the population's thoughts and behavior. The idea of "manufactured consent" should be talked about here -- because if you remove the classes and the disciplines that are the strongest in their ability to develop higher level intellectual rigor, the result is a more easily manipulated citizenry, less capable of deep interrogation and investigation of the establishment "message".

Second, you deprofessionalize and impoverish the professors (and continue to create a surplus of underemployed and unemployed Ph.D.s)

V.P. Joe Biden, a few months back, said that the reason tuitions are out of control is because of the high price of college faculty. He has NO IDEA what he is talking about. At latest count, we have 1.5 million university professors in this country, 1 million of whom are adjuncts. One million professors in America are hired on short-term contracts, most often for one semester at a time, with no job security whatsoever -- which means that they have no idea how much work they will have in any given semester, and that they are often completely unemployed over summer months when work is nearly impossible to find (and many of the unemployed adjuncts do not qualify for unemployment payments). So, one million American university professors are earning, on average, \$20K a year gross, with no benefits or healthcare, no unemployment insurance when they are out of work. Keep in mind, too, that many of the more recent Ph.Ds have entered this field often with the burden of six figure student loan debt on their backs.

There was recently an article talking about the long-term mental and physical destruction caused when people are faced with poverty and "job insecurity" -- precarious employment, or "under-employment". The article says that, in just the few short years since our 2008 economic collapse, the medical problems of this group have increased exponentially. This has been the horrible state of insecurity that America's college professors have experienced now for thirty years. It can destroy you -- breaking down your physical and emotional health. As an example: the average yearly starting salary of a university professor at Temple University in 1975 was just under \$10,000 a year, with full benefits -- health, retirement, and educational benefits (their family's could attend college for free.) And guess what? Average pay for Temple's faculty is STILL about the same -- because adjuncts now make up the majority of faculty, and earn between \$8,000 to \$14,000 a year (depending on how many courses they are assigned each semester -- there is NO guarantee of continued employment) -- but unlike the full-time professors of 1975, these adjunct jobs come with NO benefits, no health care, no retirement, no educational benefits, no offices. How many other professions report salaries that have remained at 1975 levels?

This is how you break the evil, wicked, leftist academic class in America -- you turn them into low-wage members of the precariat -- that growing number of American workers whose employment is consistently precarious. All around the country, our undergraduates are being taught by faculty living at or near the poverty line, who have little to no say in the way classes are being taught, the number of students in a class, or how curriculum is being designed.

They often have no offices in which to meet their students, no professional staff support, no professional development support. One million of our college professors are struggling to continue offering the best they can in the face of this wasteland of deteriorated professional support, while living the very worst kind of economic insecurity. Unlike those communist countries, which sometimes executed their intellectuals, here we are being killed off by lack of healthcare, by stress-related illness like heart-attacks or strokes. While we're at it, let's add suicide to that list of killers -- and readers of this blog will remember that I have written at length about adjunct faculty suicide in the past.

### Step #3: You move in a managerial/administrative class who take over governance of the university

This new class takes control of much of the university's functioning, including funding allocation, curriculum design, course offerings. If you are old enough to remember when medicine was forever changed by the appearance of the "HMO" model of managed medicine, you will have an idea of what has happened to academia. If you are not old enough -- let me tell you that Once Upon a Time, doctors ran hospitals, doctors made decisions on what treatment their patients needed. In the 1970s, during the infamous Nixon Administration, HMOs were an idea sold to the American public, said to help reign in medical costs. But once Nixon secured passage of the HMO Act in 1973, the organizations went quickly from operating on a non-profit organization model, focused on high quality health care for controlled costs, to being for-profit organizations, with lots of corporate money funding them -- and suddenly the idea of high-quality health care was sacrificed in favor of profits -- which meant taking in higher and higher premiums and offering less and less service, more denied claims, more limitations placed on doctors, who became a "managed profession".

You see the state of healthcare in this country, and how disastrous it is. Well, during this same time, there was a similar kind of development -- something akin to the HMO -- let's call it an "EMO", Educational Management Organization, began to take hold in American academia. From the 1970s until today, as the number of full-time faculty jobs continued to shrink, the number of full-time administrative jobs began to explode. As faculty was deprofessionalized and casualized, reduced to teaching as migrant contract workers, administrative jobs now offered good, solid salaries, benefits, offices, prestige and power. In 2012, administrators now outnumber faculty on every campus across the country. And just as disastrous as the HMO was to the practice of medicine in America, so is the EMO model disastrous to the practice of academia in America, and to the quality of our students' education. Benjamin Ginsburg writes about this in great detail in his book *The Fall of the Faculty*.

I'd like to mention here, too, that universities often defend their use of adjuncts -- which are now 75% of all professors in the country -- claiming that they have no choice but to hire adjuncts, as a "cost saving measure" in an increasingly defunded university. What they don't say, and without demand of transparency will NEVER say, is that they have not saved money by hiring adjuncts -- they have reduced faculty salaries, security and power. The money wasn't saved, because it was simply re-allocated to administrative salaries, coach salaries and outrageous university president salaries.

There has been a redistribution of funds away from those who actually teach, the scholars -- and therefore away from the students' education itself -- and into these administrative and executive salaries, sports costs -- and the expanded use of "consultants", PR and marketing firms, law firms. We have to add here, too, that president salaries went from being, in the 1970s, around \$25K to 30K, to being in the hundreds of thousands to MILLIONS of dollars - - salary, delayed compensation, discretionary funds, free homes, or generous housing allowances, cars and drivers, memberships to expensive country clubs.

#### Step Four: You move in corporate culture and corporate money

To further control and dominate how the university is "used" -a flood of corporate money results in changing the value and mission of the university from a place where an educated citizenry is seen as a social good, where intellect and reasoning is developed and heightened for the value of the individual and for society, to a place of vocational training, focused on profit. Corporate culture hijacked the narrative -- university was no longer attended for the development of your mind. It was where you went so you could get a "good job". Anything not immediately and directly related to job preparation or hiring was denigrated and seen as worthless -- philosophy, literature, art, history.

Anna Victoria writes, on Corporate Culture: "Many universities have relied on private sector methods of revenue generation such as the formation of private corporations, patents, increased marketing strategies, corporate partnerships, campus rentals, and for-profit e-learning enterprises. To cut costs, public universities have employed non-state employee service contractors and have streamlined their financial operations."

So what is the problem with corporate money, you might ask? A lot. When corporate money floods the universities, corporate values replace academic values. As we said before, humanities get defunded and the business school gets tons of money. Serious issues of ethics begin to develop when corporate money begins to make donations and form partnerships with science departments -- where that money buys influence regarding not only the kinds of research being done but the outcomes of that research. Corporations donate to departments, and get the use of university researchers in the bargain -- AND the ability to deduct the money as donation while using the labor, controlling and owning the research. Suddenly, the university laboratory is not a place of objective research anymore.

As one example, corporations who don't like "climate change" warnings will donate money and control research at universities, which then publish refutations of global warning proofs. OR, universities labs will be corporate-controlled in cases of FDA-approval research. This is especially dangerous when pharmaceutical companies take control of university labs to test efficacy or safety and then push approval through the governmental agencies. Another example is in economics departments -- and movies like "The Inside Job" have done a great job of showing how Wall Street has bought off high-profile economists from Harvard, or Yale, or Stanford, or MIT, to talk about the state of the stock market and the country's financial stability. Papers were being presented and published that were blatantly false, by well-respected economists who were on the payroll of Goldman Sachs or Merrill Lynch.

Academia should not be the whore of corporatism, but that's what it has become. Academia once celebrated itself as an independent institution. Academia is a culture, one that offers a long-standing worldview which values on-going, rigorous intellectual, emotional, psychological, creative development of the individual citizen. It respects and values the contributions of the scholar, the intellectual, to society. It treasures the promise of each student, and strives to offer the fullest possible support to the development of that promise. It does this not only for the good of the scholar and the student, but for the social good. Like medicine, academia existed for the social good. Neither should be a purely for-profit endeavor. And yet, in both the case of the HMO and the EMO, we have been taken over by an alien for-profit culture, our sovereignty over our own profession, our own institutions, stripped from us.

A corporate model, where profit depends on 1) maintaining a low-wage work force and 2) charging continually higher prices for their "services" is what now controls our colleges. Faculty is being squeezed from one end and our students are being squeezed from the other.

#### Step Five -- Destroy the Students

While claiming to offer them hope of a better life, our corporatized universities are ruining the lives of our students. This is accomplished through a two-prong tactic: you dumb down and destroy the quality of the education so that no one on campus is really learning to think, to question, to reason. Instead, they are learning to obey, to withstand "tests" and "exams", to follow rules, to endure absurdity and abuse. Our students have been denied full-time available faculty, the ability to develop mentors and advisors, faculty-designed syllabi which changes each semester, a wide variety of courses and options. Instead, more and more universities have core curriculum which dictates a large portion of the course of study, in which the majority of classes are administrative-designed "common syllabi" courses, taught by an army of underpaid, part-time faculty in a model that more closely resembles a factory or the industrial kitchen of a fast food restaurant than an institution of higher learning.

The Second Prong: You make college so insanely unaffordable that only the wealthiest students from the wealthiest of families can afford to go to the school debt free. Younger people may not know that for much of the 20th Century many universities in the U.S. were free -- including the CA state system -- you could establish residency in six months and go to Berkeley for free, or at very low cost. When I was an undergraduate student in the mid to late 1970s, tuition at Temple University was around \$700 a year. Today, tuition is nearly \$15,000 a year. Tuitions have increased, using CA as an example again, over 2000% since the 1970s. 2000%! This is the most directly dangerous situation for our students: pulling them into crippling debt that will follow them to the grave.

Another dangerous aspect of what is happening can be found in the shady partnership that has formed between the lending institutions and the Financial Aid Departments of universities. This is an unholy alliance. I have had students in my classes who work for Financial Aid. They tell me that they are trained to say NOT "This is what you need to borrow," but to say "This is what you can get," and to always entice the student with the highest possible number. There have been plenty of kick-back scandals between colleges and lenders -- and I'm sure there is plenty undiscovered shady business going on. So, tuition costs are out of control because of administrative, executive and coach salaries, and the loan numbers keep growing, risking a life of indebtedness for most of our students. Further, there is absolutely no incentive on the part of this corporatized university to care.

The propaganda machine here has been powerful. Students, through the belief of their parents, their K-12 teachers, their high school counselors, are convinced by constant repetition that they HAVE to go to college to have a promising, middle class life, they are convinced that this tuition debt is "worth it" -- and learn too late that it will indenture them. Let's be clear: this is not the fault of the parents, or K-12 teachers or counselors. This is an intentional message that has been repeated year in and year out that aims to convince us all about the essential quality of a college education.

So, there you have it.

Within one generation, in five easy steps, not only have the scholars and intellectuals of the country been silenced and nearly wiped out, but the entire institution has been hijacked, and recreated as a machine through which future generations will ALL be impoverished, indebted and silenced. Now, low wage migrant professors teach repetitive courses they did not design to students who travel through on a kind of conveyor belt, only to be spit out, indebted and desperate into a jobless economy.

The only people immediately benefitting inside this system are the administrative class -- whores to the corporatized colonizers, earning money in this system in order to oversee this travesty. But the most important thing to keep in mind is this: The real winners, the only people truly benefitting from the big-picture meltdown of the American university are those people who, in the 1960s, saw those vibrant college campuses as a threat to their established power. They are the same people now working feverishly to dismantle other social structures, everything from Medicare and Social Security to the Post Office.

Looking at this wreckage of American academia, we have to acknowledge: They have won.

BUT these are victors who will never declare victory -- because the carefully-maintained capitalist illusion of the "university education" still benefits them. Never, ever, admit that the university is dead. No, no. Quite the opposite. Instead, continue to insist that the university is the ONLY way to gain a successful, middle class life. Say that the university is mandatory for happiness in adulthood. All the while, maintain this low-wage precariate class of edu-migrants, continually mis-educate and indebt in the students to ensure their docility, pimp the institution out to

corporate interests. It's a win-win for those right wingers -- they've crippled those in the country who would push back against them, and have so carefully and cleverly hijacked the educational institutions that they can now be turned into part of the neoliberal/neocon machinery, further benefitting the right-wing agenda.

So now what?

This ruination has taken about a generation. Will we be able to undo this damage? Can we force refunding of our public educational system? Can we professionalize faculty, drive out the administrative glut and corporate hijackers? Can we provide free or low-cost tuition and high-quality education to our students in a way that does NOT focus only on job training, but on high-level personal and intellectual development? I believe we can. But only if we understand this as a big picture issue, and refuse to allow those in government, or those corporate-owned media mouthpieces to divide and conquer us further. This ruinous rampage is part of the much larger attack on progressive values, on the institutions of social good. The battle isn't only to reclaim the professoriate, to wipe out student debt, to raise educational outcomes -- although each of those goals deserve to be fought for. But we will win a Pyrrhic victory at best unless we understand the nature of the larger war, and fight back in a much, much bigger way to reclaim the country's values for the betterment of our citizens.

I am eager to hear from those of you who have been involved in this battle, or are about to enter it. We have a big job ahead of us, and are facing a very powerful foe in a kind of David and Goliath battle. I'm open to hearing ideas about how to build a much, much better slingshot.



20120912-28 16:57 Pam Re: Photo: This May Be the Definition of a True Friend (reply to SteveG, above)

VERY cute.

20120912-39 20:42 SteveB Re: Photo: This May Be the Definition of a True Friend (reply to SteveG, above)

Don't expect this kind of treatment when I come to visit you next year!

20120912-33 18:25 SteveG Jill Stein/Green Party Petition: Demand Fair Debates!

We Demand Fair Debates: Join Tom Morello, thousands more in launching Occupy the CPD!

Spread the word far and wide! This morning, dozens of community leaders, artists, and academics -- including Tom Morello, Leah Bolger, Richard Wolff and Medea Benjamin -- and thousands more joined together to launch Occupy the CPD. Please join them at:

<http://www.OccupytheCPD.org>.

The presidential debates are the first opportunity for millions of voters to see the presidential contenders themselves, not just their advertising campaigns. These debates are organized by the Commission on Presidential

Debates (CPD) - a supposedly "nonpartisan" corporation which is a puppet of the national Democratic and Republican parties, and the big corporations that fund both of them. The CPD's criteria to be included in these debates are designed to exclude independent contenders who promote ideas that challenge those in power.

20120912-40 22:19 SteveB "Mitt's Shameful Libya Statement" & "Why the Vileness Matters"

Question of the day: Why do SteveM and Mitt R0mney seem so much alike? What traits could they possibly have in common?

"Mitt's Shameful Libya Statement" by Steve Kornacki, Salon

Sept. 12, 2012, ([http://www.salon.com/2012/09/12/mitt%E2%80%99s\\_shameful\\_libya\\_statement/](http://www.salon.com/2012/09/12/mitt%E2%80%99s_shameful_libya_statement/))

(This is what happens when one party spends four years convincing itself the president is something he isn't.)

That it's fundamentally dishonest hasn't stopped Mitt Romney from repeating his central critique of Barack Obama's foreign policy over and over – the idea that the president "went around the world and apologized for America." So it shouldn't be surprising that Romney's response to the attacks on U.S. diplomatic installations in Egypt and Libya was rooted in the same caricature of Obama as apologizer-in-chief.

"It's disgraceful," Romney's statement, which was released late Tuesday night, read, "that the Obama administration's first response was not to condemn attacks on our diplomatic missions, but to sympathize with those who waged the attacks."

That's not at all what happened, of course. The actual chronology goes something like this: As anti-American protests inspired by a crude Terry Jones video began gathering steam, the U.S. embassy in Cairo – and not the Obama White House — put out a statement condemning "the continuing efforts by misguided individuals to hurt the religious feelings of Muslims — as we condemn efforts to offend believers of all religions."

The obvious intent was to cool the passions of the protesters. As Marc Ambinder explained, it was "exactly what Americans inside the embassy who are scared for their lives now and worry about revenge later need to have released in their name."

Protests were also building in Libya, and sometime later the U.S. consulate in Benghazi came under siege, with news breaking late Tuesday night that a State Department official had been killed. It was around this time that two major American political figures released statements. One came from Secretary of State Hillary Clinton and read: "I condemn in the strongest terms the attack on our mission. We are heartbroken by this terrible loss. There is never any justification for violent acts of this kind." The other was Romney's.

It has since been learned that a total of four people – the U.S. ambassador to Libya, Christopher Stevens, and three of his staff members – were killed in the attacks. President Obama has now issued a statement condemning the assault, praising Stevens, and pledging "all necessary resources to support the security of our personnel in Libya, and to increase security at our diplomatic posts around the globe."

The foolishness of Romney's reaction is glaring. Pretending that the statement from the U.S. embassy in Cairo was anything other than a completely understandable and reasonable attempt by its occupants to save their own lives borders on disgraceful. Romney's implication that the statement was issued at the height of the attacks is also false; it was actually released earlier in the day, a preventive measure aimed at keeping the protests from turning violent.

But this hasn't stopped other Republicans – including RNC Chairman Reince Priebus and Sarah Palin – from echoing the Romney line. Again, it probably shouldn't be surprising. This is the kind of nonsense you'll get when one party spends four years convincing itself that a president is something he isn't.

"Why the Vileness Matters" by Paul Krugman, *New York Times*

Sept. 12, 2012, (<http://krugman.blogs.nytimes.com/2012/09/12/why-the-vileness-matters/>)

I haven't weighed in on Romney's awesomely awful intervention on events in Egypt and Libya; with even Republicans joining in the chorus of shocked disapproval, not much I can add.

But maybe I can say something about why this matters for the campaign.

There will probably be some voters moved directly against Romney by this spectacle, and none moved toward him. Yes, there are quite a few Americans who are willing to believe that the man who has been president for three and a half years — and who killed Bin Laden — actually sympathizes with terrorists. But everyone in those fever swamps is already an Obama-hater, and Romney has just made himself look small and hysterical to everyone else.

But the real impact probably comes via the press.

I've seen some comparisons between Mitt Romney's position right now and that of George W. Bush after the Democratic convention in 2000, and by the numbers there is some resemblance. But what really happened in the final months of that election? The answer — not a popular one with journalists, but very obviously true to anyone who lived through it — was that the press took sides. Reporters liked Bush and didn't like Gore, and as a result they treated Bush with kid gloves while gleefully passing on every smear against his opponent ("Gore says he invented the internet!" No, he never did).

That probably wasn't going to happen this time in any case. But now Romney has really ensured that everyone in the news media, the GOP propaganda organs aside, is going to view him with distaste and alarm — as well they should.

**Romney could still win, but he has just made it even harder for anyone to consider him suitable for the job.**

<http://www.npr.org/2012/09/12/160996643/foreign-policy-tragedy-in-libya>



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

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<http://www.FriendsOfTheMiddle.org>  
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