



FRIENDS OF THE MIDDLE **NEWSLETTER #228 — SEPT. 18, 2012**

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

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Arrogant Bastard!

(posted by Steven W. Baker / SteveB, Sept. 18, 2012)

Oops! Where to find the incredibly damning videos: <http://www.motherjones.com/politics/2012/09/secret-video-romney-private-fundraiser>.



"In general, it's not great for a presidential candidate to make unsympathetic generalizations about 47% of the U.S. population. It's additionally problematic for Romney to whack them for paying too little in taxes when he's declined to provide more than two years of his own returns and pledged to cut taxes for the middle class — some of whom presumably fall into the 47% Romney is denigrating."
(<http://swampland.time.com/2012/09/17/video-captures-uncensored-mitt-romney-at-fundraiser/>)

Or as Joe Klein says in *Time*: (<http://swampland.time.com/2012/09/17/a-nation-of-moochers/?iid=sl-article-arenapage>)

"As Alex Altman reports, Mitt Romney's bad week just got worse. And the worst of the worse is Romney's contention that the 47% of the country who support Obama are just looking for handouts. This from a man who pays 14% in taxes—a multi-million dollar handout that Romney receives because he makes his money via a financial scheme that enjoys a major tax break from the government. As Michael Grunwald pointed out last week in his memorable *Time* cover story, we're all getting goodies from the government in one way or another. And yes, it might be a good idea to review all these subsidies—sugar? cotton? oil?—but it is sheer...I guess you'd have to call it class warfare to say that only the 47% voting for Obama are on the dole. How embarrassing: Romney keeps on kicking himself in the face.**"**

Duuuhhh! I'm beginning to think the dude wants to lose the election! It's some kind of psychological thingie (problem?)!

And the worst of it is that he really shows in the video with more than uttered words that he despises the 47%, enough to tell lies about them to his fat-cat donors.

Bye, bye, Mittens. I don't think you really wanted to be President anyway.

"Today, Mitt Romney Lost the Election" by Josh Barro, Bloomberg

Sep 17, 2012, (<http://www.bloomberg.com/news/2012-09-17/today-mitt-romney-lost-the-election.html>)

You can mark my prediction now: A secret recording from a closed-door Mitt Romney fundraiser, released today by David Corn at Mother Jones, has killed Mitt Romney's campaign for president.

On the tape, Romney explains that his electoral strategy involves writing off nearly half the country as unmovable Obama voters. **As Romney explains, 47 percent of Americans "believe that they are victims." He laments: "I'll never convince them they should take personal responsibility and care for their lives."**

So what's the upshot? "My job is not to worry about those people," he says. He also notes, describing President Obama's base, "These are people who pay no income tax. Forty-seven percent of Americans pay no income tax."

This is an utter disaster for Romney.

Romney already has trouble relating to the public and convincing people he cares about them. Now, he's been caught on video saying that nearly half the country consists of hopeless losers.

Romney has been vigorously denying President Obama's claims that his tax plan would raise taxes on the middle class. Now, he's been caught on video suggesting that low- and middle-income Americans are under-taxed.

(That one is especially problematic given the speculation about what's on Mitt's unreleased pre-2010 tax returns.)

Corn tells us there are more embarrassing moments on segments of the video he hasn't released yet. Romney jokes that he'd be more likely to win the election if he were Hispanic. He makes some awkward comments about whether he was born with a "silver spoon" in his mouth.

But those are survivable. The really disastrous thing is the clip about "victims," and the combination of contempt and pity that Romney shows for anyone who isn't going to vote for him.

Romney is the most opaque presidential nominee since Nixon, and people have been reduced to guessing what his true feelings are. This video provides an answer: He feels that you're a loser. It's not an answer that wins elections.

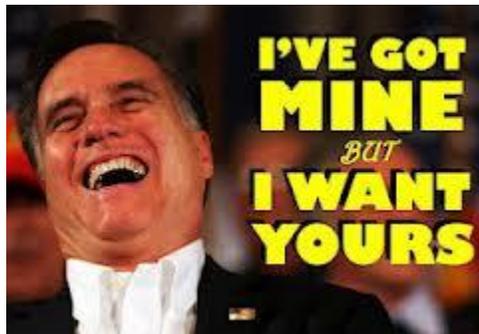
"Why the Poor Pay No Federal Income Tax: A Wee Tutorial" by Kevin Drum, Mother Jones

Sept. 17, 2012, (<http://www.motherjones.com/kevin-drum/2012/09/why-poor-pay-no-federal-income-tax-wee-tutorial>)

Is it true, as Mitt Romney says, that 47% of Americans don't pay federal income tax? Yes! That's mostly because they're either poor, elderly, or take advantage of tax credits for low-income workers. Details here. But why do these people pay no income tax? Ezra Klein breaks it down into Twitter-sized chunks:

- Republicanss have spent years cutting income taxes and increasing things like the Child Tax Credit. This means fewer people pay income taxes.
- So whenever you hear a stat like "47% don't pay income taxes," remember: Reagan and Bush helped build that.
- These tax cuts for the poor were partly in order to make further tax cuts for the rich political palatable.
- But now that fewer people pay income taxes as a result of GOP policies, they're being called lazy and dependent.
- And thus the GOP's tax cuts are being used to make a case that the rich are overtaxed and that the less-rich are becoming dependent.
- Which thus leads to a policy agenda of tax cuts for the rich and cuts to social services for the non-rich.

Yep, that's about it. Also worth noting: the poor often pay higher state tax rates than the rich. Add in payroll taxes and excise taxes, instead of cherry picking only a single tax, and it turns out that the poor and the working class end up paying a fair chunk of their income in taxes. Not as big a chunk as the rich, it's true, but then, it strikes most of us as perfectly fair that the poor should pay lower tax rates than the rich. I wonder if this strikes Romney as fair too?



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20120917-22	23:59	SteveB	Photo: Antietam Battlefield

20120917-20	22:18	SandyI	Re: Arrogant Bastard! (reply to SteveB, above)
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To me, what is scary is not what Romney says but that some keep on saying that they will vote for him in spite of what he says. It's like they are blind, deaf and dumb (in the brain sense) and are determined not to vote for Obama for whatever reason or reasons too numerous to mention. Can't they hear that Romney is including them in on his description of the "bad guys"?

20120917-03	11:15	Pam	The Unraveling of Democracy
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The Oct. *Harper's* has a great article by Kevin Baker, "Why Vote: When Your Vote Counts for Nothing." I'd like to hear some counter arguments before I swallow the thing whole, but this essay goes a long way toward vindicating any conspiracy theories I might have entertained. Baker talks about how democracy is unraveling all over the West. It's not just our economy that's in danger; it's our whole system of governance. He points out that there's not much to choose between the two political extremes, as at the end of the day their goals are the same: money and power.

I heard an interesting discussion on NPR the other day about how Germany must either "lead or leave" the EU. (Or maybe it was another article I read. No matter.) Either Germany needs to restructure Greece's (and the other countries in trouble) debt, or leave the EU altogether and let each country resolve its own problems. I'm putting it much too simplistically, but that was basically it. Baker sees the EU as inevitably doomed and a good thing too. He

makes a strong argument for each country having its own currency and its own autonomy. What there is now are debtor states and creditor states, ie., Germany, which is hardly the egalitarian ideal the EU started with. Baker gives a very different picture of Greece than the one I've been carrying around. The Greeks are not lazy, as many have averred. They work longer hours than Americans and are as responsible a citizenry as anyplace. Germany has forced austerity on them, with ruinous consequences. Look at Spain, Ireland, and England to see what austerity is doing there: high double-digit unemployment and riots in the streets. Occupy WS was a damp squib, perhaps because of its very philosophy of a movement without leaders. The next protest movement might not be so peaceful.

On the one hand you have Romney and Ryan, whose every proposal would benefit the top echelon of society. But the Clinton/Obama clique is after pretty much the same thing. According to Baker (and our own eyes), all politicians lie and make promises they never intend to keep. I concede that the bail outs were probably necessary to avert worse disaster, but did Obama have to bring the people who created the crisis into positions of power? In the old days of the political machines, the man in the street actually got something in return for his support: \$2.00 for a vote, a favorable deal, free whiskey on election day. Today it is rare to get ANYTHING in return for our support, quite the opposite. Baker quotes Obama, as the president was standing beside David Cameron, as saying, "We can honestly say that despite being two leaders from two different political traditions, we see eye to eye. We look at the world in a similar way, share the same concerns, and see the same strategic possibilities." How is such a statement possible, asks Baker, when Cameron represents the "oldest conservative political party in the world, protecting the dominance of privilege and wealth, the other America's Democrats, the oldest political party in the world, advocating the rights of man and progressive opportunity"?

Obama is a politician of the possible; I understand that. But he truckles to big money just like the rest, making sure every constituency gets an ample share of the pie. I can actually sort of agree with some critics of Obamacare who complain that no one should be "mandated" to buy anything from a private industry, ie., health insurance companies, which differs from mortgage and car insurance because those insure objects, not people. The needs are very different. Insurance companies can deny coverage and often do. A friend of mine was just turned down for payment for an MRI for breast cancer because it was "investigative." She does have cancer, but because the MRI wasn't "diagnostic," her company won't pay for it. No mortgage company tells you what color to paint your house; no car ins. co. tells you when to wash your car. No matter what Obama might like to do, the market still rules, and there is no sign of that changing soon, if ever.

It's possible that Canada has changed since I lived there over thirty years ago, but then, at least, I could see that their government was really on the side of the people. At least in Ontario. There wasn't the huge income gap that we see today. Taxes were high, compared to the U.S., but you got something substantial in return: free health insurance and higher education for starters. The only Canadians I encountered who weren't content were the Quebecois, and that's a special case. When is the last time an American was content?

I can't include the link to this essay because the Oct. issue isn't online yet, but when it is, I'll try to remember to post it. I'd really like to know what you all think about it.

20120917-09	14:13	SteveG	Re: The Unraveling of Democracy (rely to Pam, above)
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In our system of government the president usually has their hands tied, either one or both, in that all changes in the system have to go through the House and the Senate. Of course they lie – a candidate does not have all the information and then has the House and Senate to deal with. The first 2 years of a presidency is spent trying to do something and the next two are spent trying to raise money and get reelected. We have all said there needs to be election reform, campaign reform, etc. – we are no closer to that than we were 50 years ago, in fact we are further from it each year. Presidential elections have gotten to the point that the states that decide an election are identified months/years before the election and in some instances the outcome comes down to one/two states and maybe even a precinct or two – and we call that a national election. Swing states.

20120917-11	14:37	Pam	Re: The Unraveling of Democracy (rely to SteveG, above)
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Sometimes I think the whole presidential election thing is simply a huge sideshow to keep the masses occupied. (No pun intended.) It's true; the president has much less freedom to act than we're led to believe, but that seems to be changing. When a president can order assassinations or fight an undeclared war, doesn't that give him a ton of power, at least of a kind? I still think money is behind everything, as it always has been. It used to be Jewish moneylenders, then the Rothchilds, then whoever, and thinking people, me included, dismissed such notions as prejudice and hysteria. Now it's corporations and banks, and we can all see the wheels turning, but that doesn't give us any better a chance to affect what happens. Whether a conscious conspiracy or not, the end result is the same. Amazingly, Democrats were able to implement programs that were genuinely helpful to lots of Americans, but perhaps that was just a fluke. The Right has been trying to dismantle what shred of a welfare state we have, and they seem about to succeed. "Starve the beast" has been the mantra of the Right for a long time, but just how does a democratic government, according to them, supposedly crush the people? Before Social Security, old people often had nowhere to go but the poorhouse. Before Medicaid, poor children went without immunizations and dental care. I remember kids in my elementary school whose teeth were black with cavities. Before Pell Grants, poor kids couldn't go to college. I wish some Republican would show me a broad-based program, like food stamps, that has hurt people. I don't believe they can. But we have plenty of evidence that without those programs, many Americans would be a lot worse off. I'd like to hear a Republican say, just once, here's how our plan would help you. Not how our plan intends to take things away from you, like public schools, retirement at 66, secure pensions, secure medical coverage in old age. It is mind-boggling to me that the very people who will lose most under a Republican administration (the Teabaggers and their ilk) are so keen to elect a privileged, arrogant, cossetted puppet, who promises to take away every shred of a safety net that has been woven over the past 60 years. Let's saw off the branch we're sitting on and see how that works out.

20120917-12	14:49	Art	Re: The Unraveling of Democracy (rely to Pam, above)
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Haven't seen the essay yet, but interesting comments. It is a somewhat old argument that "they are all there same. Not so sure that is quite true this time. I think there is a definite difference between the Democrats, who are more the party of common normal people and the Republicans, who seem to represent the very rich. The Republicans have the strong allegiance of racists and religious fundamentalists only because President Obama has black skin and because despite the fact this nation is founded on the separation of church and state, many seem to have forgotten that. Fundamentalism is a target of opportunity that goes along with racism to some degree. Ham and all that.

However, having said that, the underlying core of the problem is money and greed. There is simply no logic that says the CEO of even a moderately performing big company should make 300 to 400 times the salary of the average employee while the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff make 10 times the salary of a PFC or about \$230,00 a year. Or that an athlete, no matter how gifted, makes \$20-\$30M a year, playing a game. If however, these guys make this much then it is only natural everybody else wants some piece of the same thing. Teachers strike, unions whine and snivel because they don't get more, and so no. No one is setting the example. As I pursue my little campaign to find out how much the CEOs of various charities make, I am frankly a bit surprised how many won't tell me and even worse how many of those salaries are astronomical. Greed, everywhere. And having reached those financial heights, they are not going to give it up and the moral of the story seems to be, the rest of us should all aspire to do what they have done.

If you are in politics and expect to stay in politics, you have to have money, lots and lots of money. The place to get it is the rich, but they expect a return. Thus even good guys and gals with the best of intentions are forced to compromise to some degree or another. This election is about one of those compromises. Are we going to tax the wealthy and the very, very wealthy in some proportion of the amount of wealth they hold or are we not? Hell, what the President proposes is small stuff in my opinion. I would tax then at 75% or more depending on their income. For Romney at \$20M a year that would be a payment of \$15M still leaving him an annual income of \$5M a year. His annual income would still more certainly than my accumulated wealth over a lifetime. President Obama doesn't propose anything like this but that doesn't necessarily make him bought off. It just makes him far more realistic than me.

Still he is sticking to his position that the tax structure must be revised. I think that is very important. If we do not, we will eventually reach a point when the only option is some sort of revolution. It happened in France and Russia

and it can happen here. In the rest of Europe the revolutions of 1848 forced the various countries to gradually make economic changes and they averted the inevitable.

As for Europe I would like to see more. I do believe that Greece, Spain and others have mismanaged things greatly just as have many of our municipalities in California and elsewhere. I read just the other day that a new law just passed in California caps retirements benefits at \$135,000 a year. \$135,000 a year!!!! I worked 30 years as an Army officer all over the world, all to frequently in combat zones, and I don't get anything close to that. What are State dogcatchers or any other State profession doing to get retirement salaries like that? It is back to the greed thing and I am sure that State employees saw nothing wrong with them getting that plus a lot more. Trouble is we cannot afford it. That, as I understand it, is the problem in Greece. Subway operators earn \$100,000 a year plus generous retirements. It is out of control, and Germany, where they don't earn anything like that, is right to demand austerity measures.

Sorry. I am rambling so I will quite. This election is important and your vote does count. If the President wins and gets any help from Congress, it may signal the start along a new path.

[20120917-13](#) 15:19 Pam Re: The Unraveling of Democracy (rely to Art, above)

I hope you're right, Art. About an Obama win signaling a move in the right direction. I just don't see how he's going to get anything done with a recalcitrant Congress, and I'm not holding my breath about that. I think California's troubles began with Prop 13. Correct me if I'm wrong. If subway drivers in Greece make \$100,000 a year, inflation must be horrific. I do think bloody revolution (revolt, riots, whatever) is a possibility--here and in Europe--unless things change. Let's start at the top. Raise taxes on the super-rich and the rich and see how far that goes toward fixing things. Then if we need to go lower, raise taxes on Mitt's \$250,000 folks, and see how far that goes. Why do we always have to start at the bottom with cuts in aid to the poor, the young, the old, and the disabled? We don't have a government that asks, How can we help? What we have is a government wringing blood out of a turnip.

[20120917-16](#) 18:39 Art Re: The Unraveling of Democracy (rely to Pam, above)

After re-reading my above is pretty incoherent. A lot going on just now.

Issue is not inflation in Europe so much as greed. If CEOs can make a lot of money, so should subway drivers. Makes sense to some and why not. Truth is you could fire all the CEOs tomorrow and replace them with people in their companies making 1% of what they make and it wouldn't make any difference. Good companies would soldier on. We do it all the time in the military. Good commanders build good organizations that don't really need them after awhile. Greece also has a terrible record of collecting taxes from the rich who probably pay far less than our rich.

I read somewhere recently that the top 1000 or maybe 2000 families have as much wealth as the bottom 2.5B humans. Collectively that is a problem and only government can fix. Corporation Boards of Directors, made up of CEOs from other corporations just keep raising CEO salaries. There is no end in sight and the system is so wired that private enterprise cannot fix it. Only the people can through government. In the end that is what this is all about.

[20120917-19](#) 19:31 Pam Re: The Unraveling of Democracy (rely to Art, above)

I totally agree, and I'm not optimistic that things will improve any time soon. I don't think I will live to see it. I'd love to be a fly on the wall in 100 years to see how it all turns out. The only hope I find is in those pockets of efficiency and ethics that do exist, like the units in the military led by good commanders, a university honors program that circumvents university bullshit, or an organization like the Guggenheim Foundation that functions like a well-oiled clock. But those pockets are the exception, it seems to me. It's funny (I guess). My husband goes bat-shit crazy when another driver does something "wrong," like roll through a stop sign or go the wrong way down

a one-way street. I drive defensively and don't let the idiots on the road get to me. What good does it do? Yet I go bat-shit crazy when I think about Teabaggers or religious extremists or greedy plutocrats or suicide bombers. My mother, in her later years, told me she had too much time to think. Maybe that's my problem. I see my kids coping with careers and family, and they're barely aware of what I think about everyday. Who's better off, I wonder.

20120917-07 12:50 SteveB "Why Romney & Ryan are Going Down"

"Why Romney and Ryan are Going Down" by Robert Reich, NationofChange

Sept. 17, 2012, (<http://www.nationofchange.org/why-romney-and-ryan-are-going-down-1347888154>)

Unemployment is still above 8 percent, job gains aren't even keeping up with population growth, the economy is barely moving forward. And yet, according to most polls, the Romney-Ryan ticket is falling further and further behind. How can this be?

Because Republicans are failing the central test of electability. Instead of putting together the largest possible coalition of voters, they're relying largely on one slice of America — middle-aged white men — and alienating just about everyone else.

Start with Hispanics, whose electoral heft keeps growing as they become an ever-larger portion of the electorate. Hispanics now favor President Obama over Romney-Ryan by a larger margin than they did six months ago.

Why? In last February's Republican primary debate Romney dubbed Arizona's controversial immigration policy — that authorized police to demand proof of citizenship from anyone looking Hispanic — a "model law" for the rest of the nation.

Romney then attacked GOP rival Texas Governor Rick Perry for supporting in-state tuition at the University of Texas for children of undocumented immigrants. And Romney advocates what he calls "self-deportation" — making life so difficult for undocumented immigrants and their families that they choose to leave.

As if all this weren't enough, the GOP has been pushing voter ID laws all over America, whose obvious aim is to intimidate Hispanic voters so they won't come to the polls. But they may be having the opposite effect — emboldening the vast majority of ethnic Hispanics, who are American citizens, to vote in even greater numbers and lend even more support to Obama and other Democrats.

Or consider women — whose political and economic impact in America continues to grow (women are fast becoming better educated than men and the major breadwinners in American homes). According to polls, the political gender gap is widening.

Why? It's not just GOP senatorial candidate Todd Akin's call to ban all abortions even in the case of "legitimate rape" (because he believes women's bodies somehow reject violent sperm). The GOP platform itself seeks to bar all abortions, with no exception for rape or incest. And on several occasions Paul Ryan has voted in favor of exactly such legislation.

Meanwhile, Republican legislators in Virginia, Pennsylvania, Idaho, and Alabama have pushed bills requiring women seeking abortions to undergo invasive vaginal ultrasound tests. All told, over 400 Republican bills are pending in state legislatures, attacking women's reproductive rights.

Republicans have repeatedly voted against legislation giving women equal pay for the same work as men. Republicans in Wisconsin have even repealed a law designed to prevent employers from discriminating against women.

Or consider students — a significant and growing electoral force, who voted overwhelmingly for Obama in 2008. What are Republicans doing to woo them back?

Paul Ryan's budget plan – approved by almost every House Republican and enthusiastically endorsed by Mitt Romney – would have allowed rates on student loans to double, adding an average of \$1,000 a year to student debt loads. (Under mounting political pressure, House Republicans came up with just enough money to keep the loan program going safely past Election Day by raiding a fund established for preventive care in the new health-care act.)

Now Romney wants to hand the federal student loan program over to the banks, which will charge even more. Earlier this year he argued subsidized student loans were bad because they encouraged colleges to raise their tuition, and suggested students ask their families for money.

Republicans have even managed to antagonize seniors by seeking to turn Medicare into vouchers whose value won't keep up with rising healthcare costs, and cutting \$800 billion out of Medicaid (which many seniors rely on for nursing home care).

And, of course, they've come out against equal marriage rights for gay couples.

Romney, Ryan, and the GOP don't seem to know how to satisfy their middle-aged white male base without at the same time turning off everyone who's not white, male, straight, or middle-aged. Unfortunately for Romney and Ryan, the people they're turning off are the majority.

20120917-01 06:50 MarthaH "What Antietam Bloodbath Teaches Us about War Today"
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"What Antietam Bloodbath Teaches Us about War Today" by Chuck Raasch, *USA Today*

Sept. 17, 2012, (<http://www.usatoday.com/news/nation/story/2012/09/17/on-antietams-150th-lessons-for-wars-in-iraq-and-afghanistan/57790744/1>)

(SHARPSBURG, MD) As a boy, Derek Crist roamed Antietam National Battlefield on the outskirts of town, its rolling hills and gentle streams a child's dream playground.

In 2010, Army Sgt. Crist returned home from two tours in Afghanistan, where nearly 2,000 American servicemembers have died. His platoon lost two soldiers. He says he had not thought deeply about the history of his hometown until he saw fellow soldiers killed and wounded. The ground where, 150 years ago Monday, more than 23,000 were killed, wounded or went missing in the bloodiest day of combat in American history is indescribably more personal.

"The loss of one friend is pretty rough," says Crist, 25, who is out of the Army and pursuing a business degree. "And then you realize you had all that going on right here."

Antietam is a gash in history that is still healing. But it also has become a place of learning, and not just for young military officers studying tactics. As the residents of Sharpsburg and surrounding communities learned long ago -- and as many Americans know from Afghanistan and Iraq -- war's aftershocks echo long after the last shots are fired.

Besides stopping Robert E. Lee's first invasion of the North and giving Abraham Lincoln the ability to issue the Emancipation Proclamation after a battlefield success, Antietam was the site of major advances in battlefield medicine that are being studied and used in Afghanistan.

As the long wars in Iraq and Afghanistan move into history, an aftermath commences -- in the memories of the fallen and in the challenges of the injured and their families.

Gettysburg will be remembered on its sesquicentennial next year as the turning point in the Civil War. By comparison, Antietam is tucked away in the history books. But arguably its legacy is as powerful, its aftermath equally poignant. On this 150th anniversary, stories are retold about families hiding in neighbors' basements; of

recovering and dying soldiers nursed in homes or churches for weeks; of diaries describing the smell and sounds of armies hurrying toward battle and limping away afterward.

Even in a war marked by seemingly endless casualty lists, the 12 hours around Sharpsburg and Antietam Creek stand alone. Tactical blunders, miscommunication, geography and individual heroism conspired to create a tableau of up-close killing so horrific that for decades thereafter, legions of veterans returned to sort through what they had survived.

Sharpsburg's annual Memorial Day parade dates to 1867, when North and South veterans began returning. Last year, Crist and other Iraq and Afghanistan vets had a place of honor.

The parade draws people from afar, swells the town and is populated by waving soldiers. That is precisely what happened to Sharpsburg on Sept. 17, 1862.

Antietam has become more than just the memory of a single day. Techniques first applied here by Jonathan Letterman, the Union Army's medical director, were the basis of modern battlefield medicine and a blueprint for today's civilian emergency response system.

At Antietam, Letterman first tried a coordinated, progressive system of trained first responders, triage stations, surgical field units and permanent hospitals. For civilians today, that's ambulances with EMTs, emergency rooms, operating rooms and hospital room convalescence.

"Every time you see an ambulance run down the road as a result of a 911 call, that is the Battle of Antietam going down the road in front of you," says George Wunderlich, executive director of the National Museum of Civil War Medicine in nearby Frederick, Md.

Since 2004, Wunderlich's non-profit Letterman Institute has had classes at Antietam for roughly 5,000 doctors, nurses, medics and other U.S. military medical personnel.

They walk the 24-acre Cornfield, which changed hands six times and left dead and wounded in heaps. They stop for lectures at Bloody Lane, where 5,600 were mowed down in three hours along an 800-yard road. They can walk in seconds across Burnside Bridge, a narrow stone arch over Antietam Creek that 150 years ago cost blue-clad Yankees three hours and 500 casualties to cross.

Wunderlich says that at each stop, "we lay out how many wounded are in this part of the battlefield. We make them think in terms of how you would do this job today."

He says physicians have studied bones from wounded Civil War soldiers because roadside bomb injuries in Iraq and Afghanistan are similar to those from cannon fire at Antietam.

Lt. Col. Justin Woodson, an emergency physician for the Uniformed Services University's Military and Emergency Medicine Department, lectures on an annual trip to Antietam for all first-year military medical students. Woodson, who served in Iraq, traces medical decisions from the point of injury to stretcher, ambulance, field hospitals and more permanent facilities as far away as Frederick, 22 miles from the battlefield.

"We do the same thing on a modern battlefield," Woodson says.

In history's broad brush, Antietam was a military draw but a strategic Northern victory. Shortly thereafter, Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation ending slavery.

The battle moved the Civil War "beyond reunion (of the states) to freeing 4 million people," says Susan Trail, superintendent of Antietam National Battlefield. "It was just a horrific battle. People by this time in the war were starting to realize this was not a lark."

Despite its proximity to history, Sharpsburg has resisted commercialization. The population is smaller today than in 1862. Developers have been shooed away for 150 years. Some buildings at the time of the battle are immaculately kept and commemorated with plaques. Others are abandoned or falling down.

"We like it to be just a small, quiet town," says Mayor Hal Spielman, who is descended from the family of Joseph Poffenberger, whose farm was a vital staging area and hospital for Union troops. It's also near where Red Cross founder Clara Barton became famous for treating the wounded.

A 2-foot-wide cannonball crevice remains in a prominent Main Street home. Poffenbergers today attend the Christ Reformed Church on Main Street, which still has blood marks on the floor and two stained-glass windows dedicated to the wounded boys of Connecticut regiments hospitalized there.

Wunderlich says some around Sharpsburg and neighboring towns still know where their families hid during the battle or which units camped on their property.

"They can tell you everything about the battle as if it happened to them," he says.
Inexplicable carnage

Bill Poffenberger, 78, says he's never understood why the Yankees never forded the Antietam Creek that he would easily wade across as a boy. He will never know, he says, what was "in a man" that could make him run into certain death or wounding at Burnside's Bridge or how the men on the other side could keep killing.

"Those were 23,000 brothers out there," Poffenberger says of the fallen.

Bob Kozak first came here from Ohio with his father in 1967. Kozak says his dad, who fought in the Pacific in World War II, stopped at Bloody Lane and said, "This was no battle. This was murder."

Kozak, who lives in Frederick, commemorates the sesquicentennial by re-creating Alexander Gardner's controversial photographic exhibit, "The Dead Of Antietam."

The black-and-whites of dead men and horses and shattered equipment sprawled across the fields was shown in New York City three weeks after the battle. Kozak says his re-creation "brings the story forward, to our doorsteps."

Shocking for a public that had never seen battlefield deaths before, Gardner's exhibit spurred debate over war censorship that echoes today, from what embedded journalists should show of combat to whether returning coffins from Iraq and Afghanistan should be photographed.

The exhibit will open Oct. 5 at the battlefield's Pry House, itself symbolic of Antietam's ripples. The Pry farm was Union Gen. George McClellan's headquarters during the battle. The house and barn were hospitals for 400 soldiers and officers. The Pry family never recovered full damages and eventually moved to Tennessee.

Days after the battle, Lincoln visited the wounded Gen. Israel Richardson at the Pry home. Richardson lingered upstairs for six weeks before dying, cared for by his wife and sister who had traveled from Michigan. They took him home for burial. They were among scores of family members who came looking for loved ones, including the father of eventual Supreme Court Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes Jr., who was critically wounded.

Each December, volunteers scatter 23,000 burning candles across the battlefield. Trail says the volume is overwhelming, even more when she thinks of those affected by each loss. She draws parallels to today, to "soldiers being away from home, people being wounded and having to adjust their lives."

"These people 150 years ago weren't any different," Trail says. "They had the same needs, the same family lives, dreams and aspirations. And so it is important for us to not just have statistics and numbers in a book."

20120917-02 07:29 SteveB "How We See Others, How They See Us"

"How We See Others, How They See Us" by Robert Wolff, OpEdNews

Sept. 16, 2012, (<http://www.opednews.com/articles/How-we-see-others-how-the-by-robert-wolff-120916-687.html>)

Americans are perhaps unique in that they are so utterly convinced that they are unique,

I did not grow up in America; the first Americans I met were Paul Robeson and Marian Anderson -- neither of them listed when I searched the web for "famous singers." I imagine famous is only after World War Two. I was not born an American, but have been one for more than half my life, more than half a century. I never learned to think exceptional, Americans know theirs is the best, the richest, the most powerful country in the world. Americans take it for granted that theirs is perhaps not the only but certainly the truest democracy. Americans cannot believe that other countries have better health services, educational systems, much more modern and well maintained infrastructures, and much faster trains. Most Europeans have six weeks paid vacation.

For a few years I worked in Malaysia when on the faculty of the University of California, San Francisco Medical Center, on a Federal Grant. One day the Embassy asked me to show an important Senator around. I showed the Senator all the usual sights ending up at the new Parliament building on the outskirts of Kuala Lumpur (all U's pronounced "oo," there is no lump in Lumpur). The building was finished but had not been officially opened. Obviously inspired by the palace and mosque in Brunei. I stopped the car to enjoy the effect of the building in white marble with gold trim, set in a moat among rolling green lawns. The Senator smiled a broad smile and said "It's so good to see American know-how and money at work". I told him that the main architect was Italian, all of it built by Malaysians, and the money was Malaysian and perhaps British; definitely not American. The senator did not believe me.

For some years the tallest building in the world was in Kuala Lumpur, now it is in Dubai.

These days I've been watching the uproar all over the Muslim world, supposedly to protest yet another ugly movie making fun of Mohammed. I hear Americans say they don't understand the furious reaction to something vague that of course the government had nothing to do with. I see it differently. This sudden explosion of hatred, from Morocco to Indonesia, is an expression of what many people have come to think of America. I've heard people say, "but we gave Egypt three billion dollars." No, we did not give that to Egypt, we gave it to the Egyptian army; not the same thing. Everybody in Egypt, Tunisia, Indonesia, Sudan, Yemen, knows that the tear gas their police uses to control mobs is "made in America". The whole world knows that we think that we can establish stable democracies (in Afghanistan and Iraq) by occupying the country. We seem to have forgotten that our democracy was established by getting out from under an occupation. Many people have heard us talk about winning the hearts and minds of people -- with heavily armed soldiers who know nothing of the culture or religion of the region, who do not speak the language and who break into houses in the middle of the night and shoot at anyone who moves? That is winning hearts and minds? The world knows that we talk democracy but what we do is train and arm police and soldiers.

America is very like many Muslim countries in that we accept the idea that the government must control how women dress, what they can and cannot do with their own bodies, who can marry whom. We have an amazing number of laws that control things like the flag, what religious texts can be displayed in public, what children are allowed to see on TV, what words cannot be said on adult TV. Issues that in most other countries are considered not the business of government.

And of course our firm belief that democracy means a two party system. In most other democracies there are more parties and voting is mandatory. No other democracy that I know of has up to half of registered voters not voting. A two party system is either/or. I have occasionally voted for the third party of the year when neither party stood for what I believed in, but learned that third party votes always are taken away from the more liberal of the two parties.

Americans think they are generous. The U.S. is at the bottom of the list of industrial countries in foreign aid as percentage of GDP with 0.14% in 2003, compared to number one, Norway 0.92%, followed by Denmark 0.84%, the Netherlands 0.81% etc. . (Yes, in Europe the commas and stops are reversed in numbers.) And there is another difference. Probably all other countries ask the receiving country what they need. The US does not ask, we decide what a foreign country needs. Our foreign aid has to be made in America and shipped by American ships/airlines

which reduces the value actually received by up to half. I've had experience with foreign aid that did not help but hinder.

Americans cannot believe that other countries have better educational systems (free all through university) , better health systems that cost half of what we pay. Better trains, much better public transportation.

What America excels in is weapons, warships, and planes. And of course advertising. A multi-billion dollar industry, bigger here than in any other country. And junk food, exported all over. And genetically manipulated plants and seeds that are "owned" by Monsanto (illegal in the European Union and Japan). And global warming, climate change denial. And unbelievable racial and religious prejudices. And Hollywood, And Football, played by young men who can play only a few years without permanent incapacitating injuries but in those few years make millions. Are these things what makes us exceptional?

Once I visited a very small island in American Samoa. There is also an independent Samoa: Samoa I Sisifu. I had spent ten years traveling all over the Pacific and SE Asia collecting information about herbs and healing practices surviving from before western medicine. When visiting the Samoan island as a guest of some Public Health people who had official things to do, I announced to the welcoming committee that I was not part of the officials, and I was interested in "native healing." A man asked me what I meant. I told him that of course people living as isolated as they were obviously must have found ways to heal wounds, attend a woman giving birth, set a broken bone. Yes, he admitted, of course there were such people on the island. He walked with me around the island introducing me to people who knew herbs that closed and healed wounds, twin sisters who helped women give birth, a man who could set broken bones "straight and strong." When I left, already in the canoe that would take me to the larger boat that would take us back to Pago Pago, my guide ran into the water, giving me a mat, a Samoan custom, thanking me, saying :"**You first Palangi tell something us is worth.**" Palangi means stranger in Samoan, now meaning American. His English may have been limited but the meaning was all too clear. We, white people, Americans, have a hard time seeing "worth" in other people. I think it is important that we know how we are seen by others. Maybe they have a hard time seeing our exceptionalism, our worth.

20120917-04

11:45

Dennis

"Banks Are Setting Us Up Again, This Time the Fall Could Be \$2.6 Trillion or More"

Don't say you weren't warned this time...

"Banks Are Setting Us Up Again, This Time the Fall Could Be \$2.6 Trillion or More" by Keith Fitz-Gerald, Money Morning

Sept. 17, 2012, (<http://moneymorning.com/2012/09/17/banks-are-setting-us-up-again-this-time-the-fall-could-be-2-6-trillion-or-more/>)

Just five years after they played a primary role in engineering the worst financial crisis since the Great Depression, America's big banks are quietly setting the world up to do it all over again.

Only this go-round the costs will be far higher and the damage much worse. This time the fall could be \$2.6 trillion or more.

Let me explain.

It started back in the mid-2000s. Wall Street was busy packaging low-rated subprime loans into securitized offerings that were somehow worth more than the sum of their parts.

In reality, what they were doing was little more than laundering toxic debt while raking in obscene profits along the way.

You know the rest of the story as well as I do. Not long after, the stuff hit the proverbial fan and it was not evenly distributed.

Well here we go again...

Both JPMorgan and Bank of America are quietly marketing a new scheme designed to "transform" sub-par assets into quality holdings that will serve as treasury-quality collateral needed to meet the new capital requirements that come into effect in 2013 as part of the Dodd-Frank Act.

This may sound complicated but it's not. It works like this.

When you trade on margin like these mega-institutions do, you are required to post collateral to offset counterparty risk. That way, if the trade busts and you are unable to deliver on your side of the trade, there is recourse.

If you have a mortgage or a car loan, you know what I'm talking about. Your lender can seize both if you default or otherwise fail to meet your payment obligations.

Trading collateral works the same way. In years past, trading collateral has most commonly taken the form of U.S. treasuries (or other securities) that meet stringent requirements with regard to ratings, liquidity, value and pricing.

However, since the financial crisis began, treasuries are in increasingly short supply. Investors and traders who have preferred safety over return are hoarding them.

Consequently, traders like JPMorgan's London-based "whale," Bruno Iksil, who want to write increasingly bigger, more sophisticated trades are in bind. They find themselves unable to trade because many times the clients they represent can't post the collateral needed to "gun" the trades.

As you might imagine, Wall Street doesn't like that because it means billions in profits and bonuses get lost as trading volumes drop.

So they've gone to the unregulated woodshed again and come up with yet more financial hocus pocus designed to circumvent rules in the name of profits.

At the same time, they're once again hiding the true extent of the risks they are taking - and that's the outrageous part.

These same banks that have already driven the world to the brink of financial oblivion and been bailed out once may need another \$2.6 trillion dollars or more to backstop the unregulated \$648 trillion derivatives playground they've created for themselves.

And don't think for a minute that your money isn't at risk either...

If you have a retirement fund, a money market fund or are invested in any sort of pension plan whatsoever, you are already involved in this game whether you signed up to play or not.

We're talking about trillions of dollars' worth of sovereign and agency debt. Think the United States, Japan, Italy, Spain, and Germany here, along with the bets on that debt -- all of which has been "backed" by central bankers, effectively removing the risk of failure from the financial markets and specifically from the firms engaged in these kinds of trades.

Of course, Wall Street has just pulled the wool over everybody's eyes by marketing most of these derivatives as "insurance" against default. In reality, they are king-sized bets levered up to levels so high that they now place entire nations at risk of default, not just individual traders or institutions.

That's because derivatives allow traders to effectively bet on directional changes in everything from interest rates to markets and currencies. They also allow firms to effectively arbitrage the relative risks between various financial instruments or lock in specific prices on everything from bonds to commodities.

Here's where we get to the meat of the matter.

As part of new rules driven by the 2010 Dodd-Frank Act, traders will have to drive the majority of privately-traded derivatives contracts through clearing houses like the Chicago based CME or the London based LCH.Clearnet, which was formerly known as the London Clearing House.

Previously they didn't because upwards of 90% of the derivatives were privately negotiated and therefore exempt from centralized exchange requirements, including margin.

In the process, they'll have to post additional collateral that can be "perfected," meaning seized and converted to cash, in the event of a counterparty failure or default.

As reported by Bloomberg, estimates from Morgan Stanley suggest the new requirements could mean the banks trading in derivatives have to come up with \$481 billion in top-rated collateral on the low side to \$2.6 trillion on the high side, which is what the Massachusetts-based Tabb Group projects.

My own estimate is somewhere in the \$4-5 trillion range, because I believe the total value of the derivatives markets is still being understated by banks and trading houses not keen to let skeletons out of the proverbial closet.

And therein lies the problem. Neither the trading firms nor their clients have the additional collateral.

What's more, they likely won't be able to get it because the vast bulk of the \$33 trillion in worldwide top-tier AAA- or AA-rated debt is already pledged as collateral or otherwise accounted for in separate transactions.

Were these banks and their clients living like the rest of us, they'd simply conclude they were "tapped out" and their resources exhausted because there would be nothing left.

But noooooo..... Under the terms of both the JPMorgan and Bank of America programs, clients not meeting the new collateralized quality standards can pledge other less-than-treasury-quality assets to the bank against a "loan" of Treasuries from the trading firm that's then posted by the trading firm as collateral acceptable to the clearing houses.

In other words, the trading firms are going to loan treasuries to clients who are incapable of meeting liquidity requirements while accepting lower grade assets in exchange. Details are hard to come by at the moment with regard to the fees they'll rake in, but you can bet "transforming" lemons into lemonade won't be cheap.

This is similar to what happens in the commercial "repo-market" where banks and trading firms temporarily pledge their assets in exchange for cash loans. Nor is it much different than pledging your paycheck at an instant loan store. In both cases, you are pledging assets against transactions that you wouldn't otherwise be able to conduct.

The fundamental question boils down to this: If we know that billions in improperly assessed risks led to the first blowup in 2007, how on earth could this be any different-- especially with trillions now on the line?

You can't wave your hand over a pile of less-than-treasury-quality assets and have them suddenly, miraculously become treasury quality because they are grouped together.

Yet, this is exactly what Wall Street is doing here.

And just like before, Wall Street's latest scheme is expressly intended to disguise risk and circumvent the specific rules about to be put in place to prevent excess leverage from potentially destroying the world's financial system.

Is there a fix?

I can think of one, but it's from a source you'd never believe in a million years would come out of my mouth: Fed Chairman Ben Bernanke.

Congress can't balance its checkbook. Our politicians can't make tough decisions. Our regulators are out-lobbied and outmaneuvered at every turn. No president can ask his nation to take its medicine regardless of party affiliation.

But Bernanke can. Supposedly - emphasis on supposedly - he's apolitical.

Acting under the Fed's dual mandates of maintaining "monetary and credit aggregates commensurate with the economy's long-run potential," Chairman Bernanke could bypass the entire political, regulatory and lobbyist morass in one fell swoop by declaring that the United States government will not back any derivatives trades -- or any firm that engages in them -- worldwide in the event of default.

Not only would this re-introduce the concept of failure into capital markets but it would do what neither Congress nor our regulators have been able to do -- put an immediate end to the kind of "profit at all cost regardless of risk behavior" that exemplifies everything wrong with Wall Street.

I can only imagine the disclaimer on one of those Uncle Sam posters more commonly associated with wartime military recruiting. It might read: "Counterparty Beware."

Until then, it's investors who should be "aware."

20120917-06	12:24	Pam	Re: "Banks Are Setting Us Up Again..." (reply to Dennis, above)
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Years ago, someone I know entered into an agreement to lend money to folks who couldn't qualify for a bank loan to buy a house. I remember the interest charged for these mortgages was 18%, considerably higher than the going rate. If the borrower defaulted, my friend took possession of the house and was free to sell it again. There was no way she could lose. At the time--and this was long before the recent financial crisis--I thought there was something sketchy, if not immoral, about this. Everything about it seemed to me to be taking advantage of poor people, with them risking a lot and my friend nothing at all. I've thought back to this many times over the years. I don't know if this deal is still going on or not, but it sticks in my craw. What the financiers are doing is big-time gambling, with other people's money. It's outrageous, and they're doing it in plain sight. We, the people, are helpless to stop them.

Praise the rich (the "successful," who after all "did it themselves"), and demonize the unemployed ("Get a job, you lazy bum!"). I think the Right is using religion as a wedge issue, derailing attention away from what's really going on. The common man may not understand derivatives and credit default swaps, but by golly he knows when someone is in bed with someone he's not supposed to be (according to the fundies). A large portion of the population is exercised about citizenship and Christianity, while the real boondoggle that is big money convinces them they're all on the same side. How could Romney and an out-of-work auto worker possibly be on the same side? By their works ye shall judge them.

20120917-05	11:53	SteveB	Fw: CREDO Action Petition: Protect Arches and Canyonlands National Parks from Fracking!
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from CREDO Action:

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) is on the verge of opening over 80,000 acres of land just miles from Arches and Canyonlands national parks to the dangerous new method of oil and gas drilling called fracking.



Despite the clear danger to these precious national treasures, and serious concerns over nearby Moab's drinking water, BLM is moving forward with a February oil and gas lease auction without even preparing an environmental impact statement to determine the full consequences.

BLM should be protecting precious places like Arches and Canyonlands, not blindly paving the way for oil and gas companies to endanger them.

This lease sale would open the area to fracking, a radical new method of oil and gas drilling that involves injecting huge amounts of water, chemicals, and sand deep underground to fracture rocks. Fracking contaminates groundwater, pollutes the air, and generates millions of gallons of toxic, radioactive wastewater. If this lease sale moves forward, Arches and Canyonlands could forever be transformed by this invasive practice.

Fracking requires the full-scale industrialization of the entire surrounding region, including a vast transport network of pipelines and compressor stations venting toxic air pollution, and open pits to store poisonous wastewater. Each fracking well also requires thousands of visits by diesel trucks hauling water, sand and toxic chemicals.

And it isn't just the national parks that are at risk. Moab's geology makes it uniquely susceptible to water contamination, and Congress never completed a comprehensive groundwater study of Moab's aquifer, so the frackers would be drilling blind.

An invasion by the fracking industry could poison Moab's water, and will transform unique, precious desert landscapes. Two of America's great natural beauties would be spoiled by an industry that leaves ruin its wake. Tell the Bureau of Land Management: Don't frack near Arches National Park. Submit a public comment to the BLM now:

http://act.credoaction.com/campaign/arches_fracking/?p=arches_fracking.

Thanks for fighting for our national treasures. —Zack Malitz, Campaign Manager

20120917-08

17:37

Tom

Graphic: Secret 'Q-eapon' Against 'Radical Islamist' Terrorists!



20120917-14

17:37

SteveB

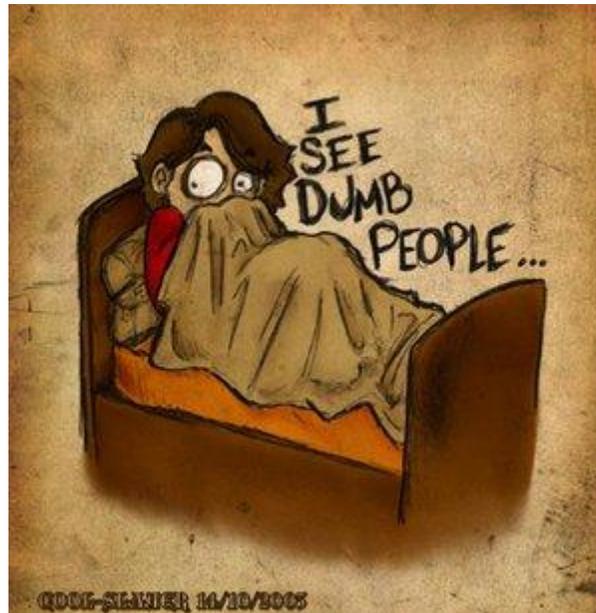
Re: Graphic: Secret 'Q-eapon' Against 'Radical Islamist' Terrorists! (reply to Tom, above)

We're gonna make `em eat pork? I definitely wouldn't want to mess with those guys!

My wife's a pig* and she's tough too!

*Chinese Horoscope

20120917-10 14:32 SteveG Cartoon: "I See Dumb People..."



20120917-15 18:38 SteveG Armed Guards at BoA

A few times a week we will walk around downtown Yakima. Like most small cities downtown consists of a variety of restaurants, retail stores, city/county buildings, parking lots, small parks, and banks. When it is open Bank of America has a guard standing outside – uniformed with a side arm. Don't know if it is loaded, has one bullet or none. Just seems strange.

20120917-17 18:44 Art Re: Armed Guards at BoA (reply to SteveG, above)

For whatever reason the B of A has the same here in Fairfax and now that I think of it other branches. Must be B of A SOP.

20120917-18 19:21 Pam Re: Armed Guards at BoA (reply to SteveG, above)

Wow. A sign of the times. There's a Chinese restaurant in east Greensboro--once very popular with the UNCG contingent-- I haven't been there in ages--that has a metal detector at the door. It's like an airport getting in. And you know what? It's only going to get worse. I'm waiting for the fences to go up around UNCG. They already have them around Bennett College. Traditional societies have always had walled compounds. We have our gated communities, but I've always admired American openness, with one yard blending into the next without a fence or barrier (except for decoration--like mine). I don't think that will last. The fences will go up; the security systems will proliferate (we have one), and our ease in public spaces will be curtailed. Why am I such a downer? I hate being this way. Somebody, please, pull me back from the edge.

I just saw an item on the CBS evening news about folks who ring the bell in Independence Hall on special occasions. They do it out of patriotism and love for America. I LOVE America. I got choked up when the 90-yr old bell ringer talked about his love of country. I desperately want the great American experiment to succeed, but I see so many forces arrayed against it. I'm as liberal as they come, but I value freedom, individual autonomy (and responsibility), and a fair free market economy just like the consersvs. I don't care if fundamentalists want to speak in tongues on a Sunday morning, though I find it beyond my understanding. Why do they have to care what two loving adults do in their own home? When Americans have always stood for free speech, no matter how uncomfortable it makes people sometimes, why do we even entertain the thought of curtailing "blasphemy"? I

guess this is what happens to every older generation: we see what we valued in life ebbing away, to be replaced by something we can't countenance. It's a good thing we don't live forever.

[20120917-21](#) 23:58 Marci Photo: `...the Mother of Invention' #4



<http://today.uconn.edu/blog/2012/09/antietam-a-civil-catastrophe/>



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

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

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