



# FRIENDS OF THE MIDDLE NEWSLETTER #229 — SEPT. 19, 2012

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## **The GOP's Bleak Future**

(posted by Steven W. Baker / SteveB, Sept. 19, 2012)

Maybe there's a natural, potent political force: past a certain point, the more extreme a party becomes, the further more extreme it must become...until when? Till all hell breaks loose, as has happened so many times in history? It would take an exceptional leader to bring the Grand Old Party back from the brink...Rick Santorum?

"GOP Civil War Is Coming as Mitt Romney Campaign Flails in Video's Wake" by Robert Shrum, Daily Beast

Sept. 18, 2012, (<http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2012/09/18/gop-civil-war-is-coming-as-mitt-romney-campaign-flails-in-video-s-wake.html>)



The video carping about government moochers may well have sealed it. Mitt Romney is going down, and the fight already is on for the future of the Republican Party. The battle will be bitter—and prolonged, says Robert Shrum.

There is a civil war gathering in the Republican Party. It looks more and more like a dispirited and disappointed collection of factions, preparing to lay blame for a lost presidential election and to do battle to shape a new direction for the Grand Old Party.

Last week the view hardened that the Republican nominee was in close to terminal trouble. Having lost the summer as he let the Obama campaign define him, having lost the conventions when he let Clint Eastwood step all over his acceptance speech, Mitt Romney spectacularly lost his head on Sept. 11 during the mob attack on U.S. diplomats in Egypt and Libya. He came across as a low-life opportunist rushing to exploit a national tragedy in order to score political points and then doubling down on this venal dumbness with a smirking and contentious press conference. This week he may well have finished the job, with a video leaking of him referring to 47 percent of the electorate as government moochers.

Romney's advisers have taken to bashing the press for covering the bad news, a near-certain sign of a losing campaign, as is the simultaneous effort to quarrel with the methodology of polls showing him trailing in the battleground states with almost no way of reaching 270 electoral votes. The surveys were largely in the field before Romney's graceless and craven charge that the Obama administration sympathized with those who murdered the nation's ambassador to Libya and three other Americans. More polls are on the way, and for Mitt the Knife, with his self-inflicted wounds, most of the numbers won't be pretty.

John Heilemann, who knows a game change when he sees it, rendered a damning verdict in New York: "Romney ... badly missed the mark." Heilemann cited the array of GOP leaders, strategists, and commentators who declined to offer even faint support or instead outright rebuked their own candidate, on and off the record. He pointed to the broader narrative emerging in the media across the ideological spectrum: Romney is losing, knows he is losing, and is starting to panic.

There are the ritual caveats. The Republican standard-bearer could transform the race during the debates. Despite the Obama enterprise's predictable and tactically savvy efforts to pump up the deflated expectations for his performance, Romney seems unlikely to morph into a latter day John F. Kennedy. It's far more likely that he will be on the defensive about his false claims and his Medicare-shredding, Social Security-threatening, education-slashing, middle-class tax-raising policies, all designed to shower more money on those who already have the most.

In an America where the party of angry white men increasingly speaks for and to a permanent minority, it could take another defeat and maybe another before the GOP comes to its senses. Moreover, you can't run on the economy if you don't have specific economic proposals—or won't answer basic questions about a 59-point plan that, in critical areas, offers zero details. In the latest New York Times/CBS numbers, the president now leads where Romney had for months: which candidate would "do a better job handling the economy and unemployment?" If Romney doesn't have the economy, what can he run on? Banning contraception? Or bankrupting the auto industry?

Or maybe exogenous events will ride to the rescue. But one of them, last week's Federal Reserve decision to launch an open-ended third round of "quantitative easing," helps the stock market and Obama in the short run and the unemployed over a longer term. The decision strengthens perceptions that the nation is on the right track, a sentiment already on the rise in the wake of Bill Clinton's and President Obama's convention speeches. Chasing another news cycle and the tale of his own flagging campaign, Romney promptly and predictably condemned the Fed for doing its statutory job, which is not only to control inflation but also to promote job creation and full employment. It was a transparent tic from a candidate who's been rooting for a slowdown all along.

What else is left, another foreign crisis? First, that's when Americans tend to rally around a president, especially one who's demonstrated coolness, judgment, and a sure sense of command, which is exactly what Obama has done. He's in an extraordinary position for a Democrat of holding a decided advantage on foreign policy, national security, and fighting terrorism. In contrast, Romney instinctively says the wrong thing, which frequently makes him look not only out of touch but out of his depth, unready for a job that demands the capacity to cope with unanticipated and potentially mortal dangers.

And Romney won't make up lost ground by pursuing a makeover on daytime TV. Last week he told Kelly Ripa that he's a "fan" of Snooki from Jersey Shore and likes to sleep wearing "as little as possible." The latter elicits an image

we didn't need. The show was taped as the Middle East upheaval escalated. It wasn't humanizing, but cringe-inducing. "Jersey Shore canceled—and Romney soon will be," was the reaction of one Republican pro.

After the first debate, see if the doubts become a rout. One measure will be the conduct of the Republican super PACs. The corpulent moneybags of casino magnate Sheldon Adelson probably will continue to flow into the presidential ad wars; after all, Adelson stuck with Newt Gingrich as Gingrich struck out in the Republican primaries. But hardheaded operatives like Karl Rove could shift their resources to Senate and House contests. They'll deny it even if they do it. And it wouldn't be good news for Democrats; the possibility—or probability—is already worrying party officials.

Such a scenario also would set the stage for the GOP's post-Romney civil war. The Tea Party Republicans who detest, or more accurately hate, this president will be maddened by his reelection. They will rage against it as illegitimate, stolen, un-American. You name it, they'll say it. And they will tear at the GOP's 2012 nominee as insufficiently conservative and insist that Republicans in the Senate and House block a second-term Obama at every turn.

A prudent party might venture at least a measure of cooperation and compromise, to prevent the standing of Republicans from collapsing as the economy moves back to prosperity. This is what smart GOP strategists will recommend. And it's precisely what John Boehner will fear to do lest he lose his House speakership—or with hope, his minority leadership—to the lean and hungry Eric Cantor.

So with Romney consigned in 2013 to his four-car elevator mansion in La Jolla, Calif., the president may face daunting challenges to governing even as he once again reaches across the aisle. His mandate could prove momentary, which is what happened to Harry Truman, who achieved almost nothing domestically in the four years after his upset win in 1948. At least this time, the Supreme Court will be saved from a right-wing coup and health-care reform won't be dispatched to extremist defenestration. And Democrats could hold the high ground for elections to come.

This outcome—in an Obama second term, in 2016, and campaigns beyond—will be magnified or modulated by the course of the irrepressible conflict between the Jeb Bush Republicans and the Paul Ryan Republicans. The two men represent very different paths. Bush stands for a tempered conservatism; he understands the impending demographic doom of a reactionary, anti-Hispanic Republican Party. He's writing a book on immigration; as he said this summer: "Don't just ... say immediately we must have controlled borders. Change the tone ... think we need a broader approach." Ryan, on the other hand, champions a hardline approach on immigration, along with virtual repeal of the New Deal and the social progress of the 1960s.

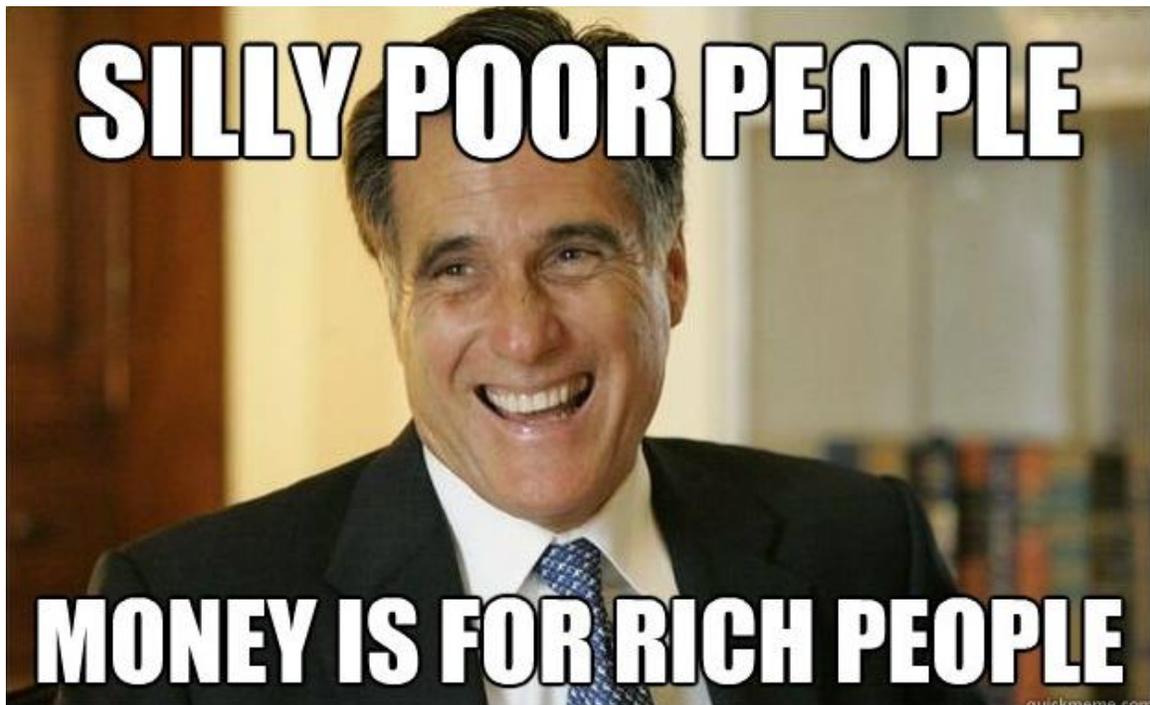
Bush's attitude—I'll borrow from his father and call it "a kinder, gentler" conservatism—could be broadly acceptable in the country, even if his brother George was all but anathema at the 2012 Republican convention. Ryan is out of step with the majority of Americans not only on immigration but on his budget plans and across a wide range of domestic policy. If Romney goes down, then Bush, the practical choice, and Ryan, likely to be lionized on the right, will be the 2016 front-runners for each faction of the GOP. Meanwhile, Republicans on Capitol Hill will have to determine whether to be modestly practical—or relentlessly ideological.

Which way will this civil war go?

Undoubtedly it will be bitter. The true believers will fulminate that they were tricked by the establishment into accepting Romney, John McCain, and free-spending, big-government fellow traveler George W. Bush. The Tea Partiers are a minority in America but almost certainly a majority in what could become a smaller and smaller Republican Party. And the GOP's experience in California suggests that one beating, or even several, may not yield a GOP self-correction but a dug-in revanchism. The state party's response has been to lurch rightward. The result, as McCain's chief 2008 strategist Steve Schmidt predicts, is that Republicans could soon become "the third party" in the nation's largest state—behind Democrats and independents.

**In an America where the party of angry white men increasingly speaks for and to a permanent minority, it could take another defeat and maybe another before the GOP comes to its senses.** Surely Romney himself would have been better off in the general election if he had defended his Massachusetts health-

care reform and sounded occasional notes of pragmatism and compassion. But then, of course, he never would have been the nominee. He could even have let us assume he wore pajamas to bed. Now hovering over his apparently desperate march toward a concession speech is the specter of Republicans fighting their protracted civil war. Someday, somehow, someone will do for the conservative side of our politics what Bill Clinton did as the progressive who brought Democrats back to the mainstream. But post-2012, maybe even Ryan won't be pure enough; it could be full-Santorum ahead.



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<a href="#">20120918-02</a>	09:32	Art	Re: Arrogant Bastard! (reply to SandyI, FotM Newsletter #228)
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Sandra, it's called racism and intolerant religious fundamentalism. They'd vote for Adolf Hitler today, knowing what we know, to get that n\*gger out of the White House.

<a href="#">20120918-05</a>	10:26	SandyI	Re: Arrogant Bastard! (reply to Art, above)
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Was listening to Fox News at a public place and heard them comparing the rallies held by the Tea Party and Occupy movement and they said, with a straight face, look at how many Occupy people had been arrested and no Tea Party attendees have been arrested and that just proved the Occupy is a fringe, unlawful abiding (to coin a phrase)

group while the Tea Party were good Americans. And the Fox watchers will buy into that and quote it and there ya go, another truth for them to hang their beliefs on.

[20120918-01](#) 09:15 Pam Re: Arrogant Bastard! (reply to SandyI, FotM Newsletter #228)

It's truly incredible. He says 47% of Americans are of no concern to him; I assume everyone has seen the video of his speech that he didn't know was being taped. And he blames the media for broadcasting what he calls an "off the cuff" remark, as if no one should take off the cuff remarks seriously, only his scripted generalities.

Then there's Rick Santorum dismissing the entire media (which to me seems to be bending over backward to cover Romney and point out how bad Obama is doing) and those "elite, smart" people who don't have real American values. I really want to know what makes these people tick. Santorum, and Romney for that matter, are not lacking in IQ. They're educated--Romney at Stanford for heaven's sake.

Do they know they're lying and just not care? When I criticize the Right, I don't have to bad mouth them; all I have to do is play something they said on Fox News. They do the job for me. But when the Right criticizes Obama and "liberals" they just throw mud. The only quote they could drag up was the one where Obama said "you didn't do that yourself," but they had to take it out of context for it to serve their purpose. And they completely ignore the fact that "that" referred to roads, bridges, etc. No. Small business owners did NOT do that. I want to know what is REALLY going on, as I think a lot of the machinations are happening behind closed doors, which leaves all of us forming opinions with incomplete evidence. That's why I'm always open to new evidence. I used to think Clinton could do no wrong. I now see that he's played a role in the financial mess; his hands aren't clean either. I still think he's trying to do the right thing for people though.

[20120918-04](#) 10:26 SteveB Re: Arrogant Bastard! (reply to Pam, above)

I agree, Pam, that we live in an age of great mysteries...

I don't remember, when I was younger, even with as seriously disturbed a man as Nixon, this air of mystery, conspiracy, and multiple lies.

And maybe my memory deceives me, but it seems like, in the old days (haha), just one lie was a big deal. I only remember one that Nixon told to the American people and he lost the Presidency over it, essentially. Clinton told a few, but they almost cost him the Presidency.

Now, Romney and Ryan don't even make up their own lies. They take them straight from the Right-wing media--Rush and the emails, and all the rest. Just for instance:

1. The Obama "apology tour".
2. Obama the "deficit spender".
3. Obama the anti-capitalist (socialist?) "You didn't build that!"
4. Obama built the entire economy, singlehandedly brick by brick and makes every decision and proof reads every government communication in the entire Executive Branch. If a ladder owned by the US government in Nigeria, for instance, falls on someone, Obama, personally, should have foreseen it, prevented it, or made an immediate announcement about it. "George Bush? Who is that? Never heard of him..." If something happens on the border with Mexico, it was somehow Obama's fault. I guess what Congress and Courts do is irrelevant, we might as well do away with them.
5. 47% of people don't pay taxes and, instead, are disgusting leeches on the rest of the citizenry.

The same debunked, lying crapola talking points we can hear on any radio and get in daily emails from the Right. None of it is really too far removed with the "birther" BS R0mney toyed with while sucking-up to Trump, earlier this year.

AND I MUST ADMIT IN AS BIG A WAY AS I POSSIBLY CAN — THIS IS ALL A ***GIANT MYSTERY*** TO ME AS TO WHY THIS HAPPENS & WHY IT IS ALLOWED TO HAPPEN BY VOTERS!!!

(Unless I'm gonna start believing very, very scary things!)

[20120918-07](#) 11:44 SteveG Re: Arrogant Bastard! (reply to SteveB, above)

I am a leech. I live on social security, savings, 401K, and have Medicare. I feel like I have paid for all of them, do not apologize for using the benefits that I have paid for, and do not pay taxes. Maybe that is because all of my real money is really kept in off shore accounts?

[20120918-09](#) 12:06 SteveB Re: Arrogant Bastard! (reply to SteveG, above)

You are no friend of Mitt R0mney's, my friend. What a loss! LOL

[20120918-13](#) 12:35 Pam Re: Arrogant Bastard! (reply to SteveB, above)

No kidding!

[20120918-18](#) 16:14 SteveG Re: Arrogant Bastard! (reply to SteveB, above)

I did close my account in Germany and the one in the Cayman Islands first.

[20120918-03](#) 10:02 Pam Re: "How We See Others, How They See Us" (reply to SteveB, FotM Newsletter #228)

I love the piece on FotM about how the rest of the world sees us vs. how we see ourselves. What braggarts we are. When I was a kid, I used to love WW II movies (go figure). I found them exciting, and they instilled in me a deep trust for America and its military. If I were caught up in some dangerous situation in another country, I thought, an American soldier would come along to protect me. Then I saw the movie "Two Women" with Sophia Loren, where she plays a mother, who along with her daughter is raped by American soldiers. It was a shocking film, but what was most shocking to me was the fact that the perpetrators were Americans. When I was in college, I remember getting into an argument with a friend about whether the FBI kept dossiers on its citizens. I swore up and down that such a thing was simply not possible. I was wrong. J. Edgar had the goods on the high and the low and had more power than it is comfortable for us to admit, even today. When I was in Afghanistan, I thought the Americans were there to help. I know my dad was. My eyes were opened one night at a performance of "Macbeth" at the American embassy, followed by a party for actors and audience. There was always lots of liquor at such events, and lots of jokes at Afghans' expense. For example, Afghans were mocked for blowing their noses with their fingers. There was a lot of laughter at that one the night of the party in question. I noticed that standing around the room were the Afghan men who were serving the refreshments and serving as general dogsbodies. They were not so amused, not by the drunkenness and not by the "humor." Remember, the audience was comprised of diplomats and their families, aid workers and theirs, and the Marine guards from the embassy--good stalwart Americans all. I'm sure I've been wrong about many things and people. But one thing I'm not wrong about is what's contained in that article on FotM.

[20120918-06](#) 10:39 Jim Greed

There is an old story I remember from the fifties that seems to touch on some of these elitists.

A man was told that he was going to be given all the money in the world -- except for ten cents that was going to John Jones.

And his first words on being told that were not, "Why am I getting all this?"

But, "Why does John Jones get one dime of MY money?"

<a href="#">20120918-08</a>	11:45	SteveG	"Shocking Report Explodes 5 Myths About American Education"
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"Shocking Report Explodes 5 Myths About American Education" by Les Leopold, AlterNet

Sept. 18, 2012, (<http://www.alternet.org/education/shocking-report-explodes-5-myths-about-american-education>)

A new international report ([file:///Users/joshuaholland/Downloads/download.ei-ie.org/Docs/WebDepot/EI\\_Analysis\\_EAG2012\\_non-official.pdf](file:///Users/joshuaholland/Downloads/download.ei-ie.org/Docs/WebDepot/EI_Analysis_EAG2012_non-official.pdf)) demolishes several deeply held myths about our educational system. The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) report, which compares the educational systems of over 30 developed nations, provides data that, when it comes to education, proves we're so far from being number one, that the entire idea of American exceptionalism should be called into question. Rather than thumping our chests, we should be going to school on how other developed nations, especially those in Europe, invest in education. However, we have little chance of learning until we break through the mythology that blinds us to our decline.

Myth #1: Our educational system provides more upward mobility than any other in the world.

It's practically a sacred oath to proclaim that we lead the world in upward mobility. America, we are told ad nauseum, is the best place on Earth for a poor person to improve his or her station in life. You might struggle for one generation or so, but your kids can make it up the ladder faster here than any place else. And the reason, of course, is because we provide the best educational opportunities for all young people, rich and poor.

Not true, says the OECD report. "The odds that a young person in the U.S. will be in higher education if his or her parents do not have an upper secondary education are just 29 percent -- one of the lowest levels among OECD countries."

Just how low is our ranking? Of the 28 countries listed, we're third from the bottom.

Myth #2: Our teachers (protected by their greedy unions) work less and get paid more.

It's open season on public employees, especially teachers and their unions. They get paid too much. Their benefits are too high. They get tenure while the rest of us fear layoffs. And they're a bunch of lazy louts that get the entire summer off! If there's educational decline, then teachers must be the cause. Right?

Wrong! Says the OECD report, especially when it comes to hours worked: "Teachers in the U.S. spend between 1050 and 1100 hours a year teaching -- much more than in almost every country." Of the 38 countries surveyed only two countries had teachers who worked more hours -- Argentina and Chile. And when it comes to the hours worked per years by our primary school teachers, we're number one!

But surely, aren't these unionized teachers making too much money? Not according to the OECD report: "Despite high overall levels of spending on education, teacher salaries in the U.S. compare poorly. While in most OECD countries teacher salaries tend to be lower, on average, than the salaries earned by other workers with higher education, in the U.S. the difference is large, especially for teachers with minimum qualifications."

Myth #3: Big government (via our tax dollars) funds higher education.

In state after state politicians are taking an ax to higher education budgets. As we plow more money into our prison system, we no longer can afford our lavish public colleges and universities, or so we are told. (See "Crazy Country: 6 Reasons America Spends More on Prisons Than on Higher Education," <http://www.alternet.org/education/crazy-country-6-reasons-america-spends-more-prisons-higher-education?paging=off>). But overall, don't we still lead the world in big government support for higher education?

Well, we almost lead the world in overall spending on higher education, both in absolute dollars and as a percent of GDP. Unfortunately, we place more of the burden on students and their families than just about any other developed nation: "In the U.S., 38 percent of higher education expenditures come from public sources, and 62 percent are from private sources. Across all OECD countries, 70 percent of expenditures on higher education come from public sources, and 30 percent are from private sources." Little wonder we have a trillion dollar student loan industry that serves as an ever-present lobby to make sure the debt burden remains students and their families.

#### Myth #4: We provide excellent early childhood education.

Worried about creeping socialism? Look no further than Head Start and other pre-school programs we throw money at. Isn't this where the Nanny State begins?

Blinded by anti-government ideology, we fail to notice that the rest of the world invests much more in their young people, especially the very young: "On average across OECD countries, 84 percent of pupils in early childhood education attend programs in public schools or government-dependent private institutions, while in the U.S., 55 percent of early childhood pupils attend programs in public schools, and 45 percent attend independent private programs. In the U.S. the typical starting age for early childhood education is 4 years old, while in 21 other OECD countries, it is 3 years old or younger."

Even more telling is the fact that we tend not to employ professional educators for our very young. As the report delicately puts it: "In addition, education-only, early childhood programs in other countries are usually delivered by a qualified teacher and have a formal curriculum, while in the U.S., the situation can vary." Vary indeed.

So where are we ranked?

- 3-year-olds (in early childhood education): 25th of 36 countries.
- 4-year-olds (in early childhood education and primary education): 28th of 38 countries.
- 5- to 14-year-olds (all levels): 29th of 39 countries.

#### Myth #5: We have the highest percentage of college grads in the world.

OK, we may have some issues with early childhood education, who pays for college, upward mobility and public support for higher education. But, as the politicians tell us, we are going to win the global competition for knowledge-based industries and jobs, precisely because we have the best universities and the most college graduates.

While it's difficult to compare global colleges and universities (and while I'm certain that we do have some of the very best elite institutions), it is possible to compare the number college graduates among developed nations. Again, we suffer by the comparison: "The U.S. ranks 14th in the world in the percentage of 25-34 year-olds with higher education (42 percent)." Those are our young people. That's our future. And the richest country on Earth can't even win the competition for the highest percentage of college graduates?

So aren't we number one in something?

Yes, we are and it's revealing. We're number one in 55- to 64-year-olds who finished high school. We boomers actually went to school – 90 percent of us finished high school while the OECD average is 65 percent.

That statistic takes us right to the heart of this story – how during the post-WWII era the United States invested in its people. The GI Bill of Rights provided free higher education to more than 3 million returning GIs. Enormous investments in education helped us catch up with Sputnik and win the race to the moon. The super-rich faced high

tax rates so that we could pay for education, a national highway system, and the defense budget. Unions were supported by the federal government and moved wages up across the board. And the burgeoning civil rights movement began to bring the promise of America to African Americans. The middle class was rising. We went to school. And we created the fairest income distribution in our history.

Then, we tossed it away as we forgot the lessons of the Great Depression and our collective response during WWII. We deregulated the rich and they tore our country apart.

You see, none of these myths apply to the wealthy. Their kids get plenty of early childhood education. Their kids don't attend run-down schools. Their kids don't run up debts in order to go to college. In fact, our elites are positioned perfectly to thrive in a global economy. They can attack public schools, teachers unions, big government and not suffer the consequences. Frankly they don't give a damn about our international rankings. The rich are quite happy for the rest of us to swallow the myth of American exceptionalism, even when reality shows how exceptionally bad we are at providing decent education for all of our people.

[20120918-10](#) 12:08 Bill Re: Armed Guards at BoA (reply to SteveG, FotM Newsletter #228)

SteveG: 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.

They had warning that you were coming, Steve.

[20120918-11](#) 12:26 SteveB "We Won, for Now"

"We Won, for Now" by Chris Hedges, Truthdig/NationofChange

Sept. 18, 2012, (<http://www.nationofchange.org/we-won-now-1347976565>)

In January, I sued President Barack Obama over Section 1021(b)(2) of the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA), which authorized the military to detain U.S. citizens indefinitely, strip them of due process and hold them in military facilities, including offshore penal colonies. Last week, round one in the battle to strike down the onerous provision, one that saw me joined by six other plaintiffs including Noam Chomsky and Daniel Ellsberg, ended in an unqualified victory for the public. U.S. District Judge Katherine Forrest, who accepted every one of our challenges to the law, made her temporary injunction of the section permanent. In short, she declared the law unconstitutional.

Almost immediately after Judge Forrest ruled, the Obama administration challenged the decision. Government prosecutors called the opinion "unprecedented" and said that "the government has compelling arguments that it should be reversed." The government added that it was an "extraordinary injunction of worldwide scope." Government lawyers asked late Friday for an immediate stay of Forrest's ban on the use of the military in domestic policing and on the empowering of the government to strip U.S. citizens of due process. The request for a stay was an attempt by the government to get the judge, pending appeal to a higher court, to grant it the right to continue to use the law. Forrest swiftly rejected the stay, setting in motion a fast-paced appeal to the 2nd U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals and possibly, if her ruling is upheld there, to the Supreme Court of the United States. The Justice Department sent a letter to Forrest and the 2nd Circuit late Friday night informing them that at 9 a.m. Monday the Obama administration would ask the 2nd Circuit for an emergency stay that would lift Forrest's injunction. This would allow Obama to continue to operate with indefinite detention authority until a formal appeal was heard. The government's decision has triggered a constitutional showdown between the president and the judiciary.

"This may be the most significant constitutional standoff since the Pentagon Papers case," said Carl Mayer, co-lead counsel for the plaintiffs.

"The administration of President Obama within the last 48 hours has decided to engage in an all-out campaign to block and overturn an order of a federal judge," said co-lead counsel Bruce Afran. "As Judge Forrest noted in her opinion, nothing is more fundamental in American law than the possibility that journalists, activists and citizens could lose their liberty, potentially forever, and the Obama administration has now lined up squarely with the most conservative elements of the Republican Party to undermine Americans' civil liberties."

The request by the government to keep the law on the books during the appeal process raises a disturbing question. If the administration is this anxious to restore this section of the NDAA, is it because the Obama government has already used it? Or does it have plans to use the section in the immediate future?

"A Department of Homeland Security bulletin was issued Friday claiming that the riots [in the Middle East] are likely to come to the U.S. and saying that DHS is looking for the Islamic leaders of these likely riots," Afran said. "It is my view that this is why the government wants to reopen the NDAA—so it has a tool to round up would-be Islamic protesters before they can launch any protest, violent or otherwise. Right now there are no legal tools to arrest would-be protesters. The NDAA would give the government such power. Since the request to vacate the injunction only comes about on the day of the riots, and following the DHS bulletin, it seems to me that the two are connected. The government wants to reopen the NDAA injunction so that they can use it to block protests."

The decision to vigorously fight Forrest's ruling is a further example of the Obama White House's steady and relentless assault against civil liberties, an assault that is more severe than that carried out by George W. Bush. Obama has refused to restore habeas corpus. He supports the FISA Amendment Act, which retroactively makes legal what under our Constitution has traditionally been illegal—warrantless wire tapping, eavesdropping and monitoring directed against U.S. citizens. He has used the Espionage Act six times against whistle-blowers who have exposed government crimes, including war crimes, to the public. He interprets the 2001 Authorization to Use Military Force Act as giving him the authority to assassinate U.S. citizens, as he did the cleric Anwar al-Awlaki. And now he wants the right to use the armed forces to throw U.S. citizens into military prisons, where they will have no right to a trial and no defined length of detention.

Liberal apologists for Barack Obama should read Judge Forrest's 112-page ruling. It is a chilling explication and denunciation of the massive erosion of the separation of powers. It courageously challenges the overreach of Congress and the executive branch in stripping Americans of some of our most cherished constitutional rights.

In the last 220 years there have been only about 135 judicial rulings that have struck down an act of Congress. Most of the cases involved abortion or pornography. Very few dealt with wartime powers and the separation of powers, or what Forrest in her opinion called "a question of defining an individual's core liberties."

Section 1021(b)(2) authorizes the military to detain any U.S. citizen who "substantially supported" al-Qaida, the Taliban or "associated forces" and then hold them in military compounds until "the end of hostilities." The vagueness of the language, and the refusal to exempt journalists, means that those of us who as part of our reporting have direct contact with individuals or groups deemed to be part of a terrorist network can find ourselves seized and detained under the provision.

"The Government was unable to offer definitions for the phrases 'substantially support' or 'directly support,' " the judge wrote. "In particular, when the Court asked for one example of what 'substantially support' means, the Government stated, 'I'm not in a position to give one specific example.' When asked about the phrase 'directly support,' the Government stated, 'I have not thought through exactly and we have not come to a position on 'direct support' and what that means.' In its pre-trial memoranda, the Government also did not provide any definitional examples for those terms."

The judge's ruling asked whether a news article deemed by authorities as favorable to the Taliban could be interpreted as having "substantially supported" the Taliban.

"How about a YouTube video?" she went on. "Where is the line between what the government would consider 'journalistic reporting' and 'propaganda?' Who will make such determinations? Will there be an office established to read articles, watch videos, and evaluate speeches in order to make judgments along a spectrum of where the support is 'modest' or 'substantial?'"

Forrest concurred with the plaintiffs that the statute violated our free speech rights and due-process guarantees. She noted that "the Court repeatedly asked the Government whether those particular past activities could subject plaintiffs to indefinite detention; the Government refused to answer." The judge went on to criticize the nebulous language of the law, chastising the government because it "did not provide particular definitions." She wrote that "the statute's vagueness falls far short of what due process requires."

Although government lawyers argued during the trial that the law represented no change from prior legislation, they now assert that blocking it imperils the nation's security. It is one of numerous contradictions in the government's case, many of which were illuminated in Forrest's opinion. The government, she wrote, "argues that no future administration could interpret § 1021(b)(2) or the AUMF differently because the two are so clearly the same. That frankly makes no sense, particularly in light of the Government's inability at the March and August hearings to define certain terms in—or the scope of—§ 1021(b)(2)." The judge said that "Section 1021 appears to be a legislative attempt at an ex post facto 'fix': to provide the President (in 2012) with broader detention authority than was provided in the AUMF [Authorization to Use Military Force Act] in 2001 and to try and ratify past detentions which may have occurred under an overly-broad interpretation of the AUMF."

The government, in effect, is attempting to push through a law similar to the legislation that permitted the government to intern 110,000 Japanese-Americans during World War II. This law, if it comes back into force, would facilitate the mass internment of Muslim Americans as well as those deemed to "support" groups or activities defined as terrorist by the state. Calling the 1944 ruling "an embarrassment," Forrest referred to *Korematsu v. United States*, which upheld the government's internment of Japanese-Americans.

The judge said in her opinion that the government "did not submit any evidence in support of its positions. It did not call a single witness, submit a single declaration, or offer a single document at any point during these proceedings." She went on to write that she found "the testimony of each plaintiff credible."

"At the March hearing, the Court asked whether Hedges' activities could subject him to detention under § 1021; the Government stated that it was not prepared to address that question. When asked a similar question at the August hearing, five months later, the Government remained unwilling to state whether any of plaintiffs' (including Hedges's) protected First Amendment future activities could subject him or her to detention under § 1021. This Court finds that Hedges has a reasonable fear of detention pursuant to § 1021(b)(2)."

The government has now lost four times in a litigation that has gone on almost nine months. It lost the preliminary injunction in May. It lost a motion for reconsideration shortly thereafter. It lost the permanent injunction. It lost its request last week for a stay. We won't stop fighting this, but it is deeply disturbing that the Obama administration, rather than protecting our civil liberties and democracy, insists on further eroding them by expanding the power of the military to seize U.S. citizens and control our streets.

20120918-12	12:32	Pam	'A Question About Direction'
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"This is ultimately a question about direction for the country. Do you believe in a government-centered society that provides more and more benefits or do you believe instead in a free enterprise society where people are able to pursue their dreams?" --Mitt Romney

I would like, if I may, to deconstruct this statement by one of our leading presidential candidates. He is right: we do face the question of what kind of country we want to live in, and the way Romney couches his opinion is loaded with unstated (but readily understood) assumptions.

#### Assumption #1

A government that provides for the welfare (health, education, safety) of its citizens is "government-centered." This is Orwellian doublespeak, akin to a university (which shall be unnamed) proclaiming itself "student-centered," while at the same time raising tuition and fees, enlarging class size, cutting programs, admitting more and more students it never expects to graduate because they can pay, building ever more

"dorms"-- which are basically spas with private apartments containing 42" flat-screen TVs. A government that provides for the well being of its citizens is not "government-centered," it is people-centered.

#### Assumption #2

Providing more benefits weakens our moral fiber and hurts the free market by spending money on schools, bridges, and hospitals that could be going into shareholders' pockets.

#### Assumption #3

Benefits are handouts that only selfish people believe they're entitled to. Entitlements are gifts from the government rather than a return for work and financial contributions (taxes, pension plans).

#### Assumption #4

A free-market society is inconsistent with generous social benefits. Either we allow for laissez-faire economics or we become enablers of the unfortunate, ie., "losers."

#### Assumption #5

All people have "dreams," which by implication means starting a business and making lots of money. People whose dreams include enough food for their children, adequate medical care, a safe place for the elderly to spend their declining years, a decent education, and a chance at a job that will provide security rather than risk are the authors of their own fate.

#### Assumption #6

The only "dreams" worth pursuing involve making money. Everything goes back to business and entrepreneurship; being a doctor in the inner city, a teacher, a fire fighter--these are not dreams worth anything like as much as a new Burger King franchise.

#### Assumption #7

The people with "dreams" need everyone else to get out of their way. And if all people don't have the kind of dreams the Republicans admire, then too bad. They lack gumption, independence, resolution, and it's their own fault. It's more important to clear a path for the few who succeed spectacularly than to ensure that the many whose dreams are modest don't get left permanently behind.

<a href="#">20120918-27</a> 19:17 Art Re: 'A Question About Direction' (reply to Pam, above)
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This is brilliant! Thanks, Pam.

<a href="#">20120918-14</a> 13:33 SteveB Re: 'A Question About Direction' (reply to Pam, above)
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WOW! The hair is standing up on the back of my neck...maybe because this comes on the heels of my near orgasmic experience thinking about the depth of Mitt Romney's audacity and stupidity as revealed in these latest video bombshells.

I love what you said here, Pam. It goes outside the groove of the lives we are told we have, and looks at reality from a refreshing perspective. It should be widely read!

Thanks Pam and all of you for making this such a fun election.

20120918-24 17:20 Ken Re: 'A Question About Direction' (reply to Pam, above)

Pam, your recent political "IMHO's" have been spot on. Well said. Imagine what a real social safety net of guaranteed, portable healthcare (with mental & oral healthy) could do for the productivity of the American worker.

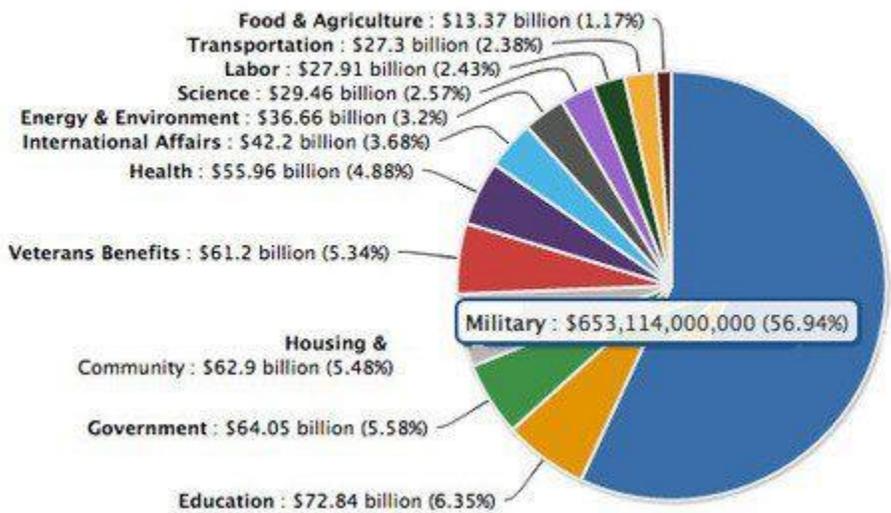
20120918-25 18:54 Pam Re: 'A Question About Direction' (reply to Ken, above)

I just heard (on NPR) Mitt Romney complain about those who want to "redistribute income." Yes, I want a redistribution of wealth. Income redistribution seems to be one of the big uglies for the Republicans, but unless everyone gets brought closer to the middle, we're sunk. I'm not a communist; I'm not even a socialist. I appreciate the vigor and innovation made possible by healthy capitalism, but a healthy society cannot long endure if the top minority has immeasurably more than the bottom majority. No society with this kind of income gap has been long-lasting or safe. I simply do not comprehend how the rich don't see the danger their ideas, if implemented, could put them in. All you have to do is tune into the news to see what a disaffected populace is capable of. I loved what Justice Souter said about our ignorance setting us up for a strongman dictator who will "solve" all our problems--like Tito, Napoleon, Hitler, Stalin, Ghadaffi, the list goes on. Many Americans have no clue to our history, let alone world history, and they are unaware of how much democracy depends upon an educated populace to function. I have a lot of education, and I still assume that I'm misled some of the time by what our politicians say. I'm used to questioning everything, but if all I knew was to trust whatever authorities I --well--trusted, I'd be easy pickings for a demagogue with a slick message.

Romney complains about citizens who think the government owes them housing, health care, food, you name it. To my knowledge, the people who depend on government for these basics are not like you and me. No, they're like my friend Theresa who is so disabled she can't breathe unassisted but who clings to her family home because she doesn't want to be any more dependent than she has to be. The state, in its wisdom, wants to put her in a nursing home, which would be way more expensive than the home care she receives now. Or they're like my former student's autistic son, who will need care and support for the rest of his life. No family, unless you're a Romney, could afford the care this kid requires. His parents both work at good jobs; one is a public school teacher. They need help, but Romney sees them as moochers who don't take responsibility. Honestly? The man makes me sick. I cannot believe he and Obama are in a dead heat. What on earth is going on? Seriously.

20120918-26 19:10 SteveG Re: 'A Question About Direction' (reply to Pam, above) & Grahpic: Federal Discretionary Spending FY 2013

### DISCRETIONARY SPENDING FY 2013



20120918-15

14:09

SteveB

Fw: CREDO Action Petition: Thank Mitt for Letting 47% of Americans Know He Thinks They're Pieces of Sh\*t!

from CREDO Action:

In a secretly recorded videotape from a Republican high dollar fundraiser, Mitt Romney incredulously claims that 47% of Americans don't pay taxes. That they are effectively sponging off the government and the taxpayers. And that President Obama is counting on these voters who are "dependent on government" to win reelection. Mitt Romney will say anything to the American people to get to the White House. He'll say anything to help himself and his rich buddies rise to power. And normally he'll say anything to hide his true disdain for most Americans. Here's Mitt Romney's exact, unbelievable quote:<sup>1</sup>

There are 47 percent of the people who will vote for the president no matter what. All right, there are 47 percent who are with him, who are dependent upon government, who believe that they are victims, who believe the government has a responsibility to care for them, who believe that they are entitled! to health care, to food, to housing, to you-name-it. That that's an entitlement. And the government should give it to them. And they will vote for this president no matter what...These are people who pay no income tax... [M]y job is not to worry about those people. I'll never convince them they should take personal responsibility and care for their lives.

**Tell Mitt Romney: Thanks for letting us know exactly where you stand — exclusively for the richest Americans.**

Schools. Roads. Police. Every American depends on government. But elitists like Mitt Romney think that he and his rich buddies got wealthy despite the social goods that government provides. What's more, Mitt Romney is advancing hateful statements suggesting that most people who support President Obama do so because they are on public assistance.

**This is not only blatantly untrue. It's not merely hateful and divisive rhetoric. It's also incredibly ironic. Mitt Romney has parked millions in tax havens overseas, and has refused to come clean to the American people and release his tax returns. How hypocritical for Mitt Romney to accuse anyone, let alone nearly half of all Americans, of paying no income tax.**

In fact, even conservative columnist David Brooks is appalled by Mitt Romney's statements. He writes in the *New York Times*:<sup>2</sup>

The people who receive the disproportionate share of government spending are not big-government lovers. They are Republicans. They are senior citizens. They are white men with high school degrees. As Bill Galston of the Brookings Institution has noted, the people who have benefited from the entitlements explosion are middle-class workers, more so than the dependent poor.

Mitt Romney's statement exposes the Republican presidential candidate's deeply skewed world view: anyone who is starving deserves it. Homeless people deserve it. People who are sick and can't afford health care (because people like Mitt Romney have given health insurance executives free rein to drive up the cost of healthcare for the sake of their bottom line) deserve to choose between treatment and bankruptcy.

What Mitt Romney is saying on the campaign trail is shameful. It's often coded but in unguarded moments with his wealthy donors he reveals what he really thinks. The rich deserve the hand outs they get from government and the regular folks who pay into Social Security and Medicare are freeloading bloodsuckers.

**Well, we don't agree. Americans deserve a president who will represent the 99%, not pillage our treasury and trample on the constitution on behalf of his fellow members of the 1%.**

Click below to sign the petition:

[http://www.credoaction.com/campaign/romney\\_47percent/?rc=homepage](http://www.credoaction.com/campaign/romney_47percent/?rc=homepage).

Becky Bond, Political Director

<sup>1</sup>David Corn, "SECRET VIDEO: Romney Tells Millionaire Donors What He REALLY Thinks of Obama Voters," Mother Jones, Sept. 17, 2012, <http://act.credoaction.com/r/?r=6963391&id=47100-5766577-Lk8Q33x&t=12>.

<sup>2</sup>David Brooks, "Thurston Howell Romney," *The New York Times*, Sept. 17, 2012, <http://act.credoaction.com/r/?r=6963392&id=47100-5766577-Lk8Q33x&t=13>.

[20120918-16](#) 15:32 SandyI Video: The Jovers, Vaudeville Comedy Duo

They just don't do great comedy like this any longer. The old vaudeville is still the best. Enjoy!

Ah, the joy of a good clean laugh that you can even share with the children and grandchildren.

<http://biggeekdad.com/2012/05/the-jovers/#.UFd5BzS3dKA.gmail>

[20120918-17](#) 15:35 Ben Photos: Today's Lunch at Apple

Seared steelhead trout -- perfectly seared to a Queen's taste, with golden-crispy skin, moist, flaky, and very tasty light pink flesh -- is a great complement to root vegetables. Delicate trout, robust earthy vegetables. I haven't much spare time today, as I've been in the Midwest for the wedding of one of my five nieces; she's the second one to take the Plunge. It was, in fact the low-vegetable dining in the midwest that tipped me over the scale in the Unagi versus Trout debate. I really WANTED the unagi: I love the stuff, and want the cafeteria to know. But I couldn't pass up beets, carrots, and tomatoes in favor of a few leaves. Chef Blad was so surprised he doubled down on the filets; with the huge mat of vegetables (concealed by the filets in the photo) and two very healthy steelhead filets, I am currently VERY stuffed:



## Seared Trout with Cherry Tomatoes, Roasted Beets and Carrots



Desserts Not Taken

20120918-19

16:18

SteveG

"Former Justice Souter: 'Pervasive Civic Ignorance' in U.S. Could Bring Dictatorship"

This is real...

"Former Justice Souter: 'Pervasive Civic Ignorance' in U.S. Could Bring Dictatorship" by Eric W. Dolan, The Raw Story

Sept. 17, 2012, ([http://www.rawstory.com/rs/2012/09/17/former-justice-souter-pervasive-civic-ignorance-in-u-s-could-bring-dictatorship/?utm\\_source=Raw+Story+Daily+Update&utm\\_campaign=13e33eada7-9\\_18\\_129\\_18\\_2012&utm\\_medium=email](http://www.rawstory.com/rs/2012/09/17/former-justice-souter-pervasive-civic-ignorance-in-u-s-could-bring-dictatorship/?utm_source=Raw+Story+Daily+Update&utm_campaign=13e33eada7-9_18_129_18_2012&utm_medium=email))

Retired U.S. Supreme Court Justice David H. Souter thinks the decline of civic education is putting the United States in danger.

During a question and answer session last week at University of New Hampshire School of Law, Souter described "pervasive civic ignorance" as one of the biggest problems in the United States. He warned that Americans' ignorance about their own government could lead to a dictatorship.

"I don't worry about our losing a republican government in the United States because I'm afraid of a foreign invasion, he said. "I don't worry about it because of a coup by the military, as has happened in some other places. What I worry about is that when problems are not addressed people will not know who is responsible, and when the problems get bad enough — as they might do for example with another serious terrorist attack, as they might do with another financial meltdown — some one person will come forward and say 'Give me total power and I will solve this problem.'"

"That is how the Roman republic fell," Souter continued. "Augustus became emperor not because he arrested the Roman senate. He became emperor because he promised that he would solve problems that were not being solved."

"If we know who is responsible, I have enough faith in the American people to demand performance from those responsible. If we don't know, we will stay away from the polls, we will not demand it and the day will come when somebody will come forward and we and the government will in effect say, 'Take the ball and run with it, do what you have to do.' That is the way democracy dies."

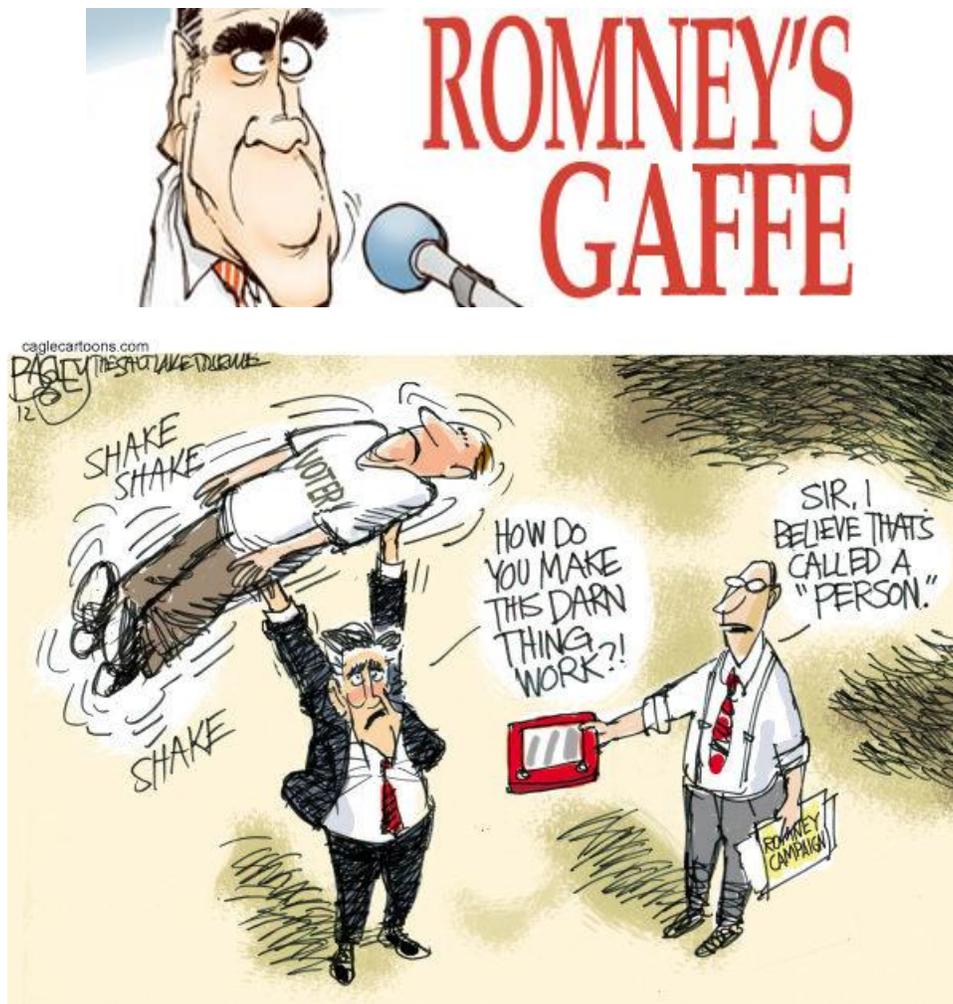
Watch video, uploaded to YouTube by "PBS Newshour":

[http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player\\_embedded&v=rWcVtWennr0](http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=rWcVtWennr0).

<a href="#">20120918-21</a>	16:51	Pam	Re: "Former Justice Souter: 'Pervasive Civic Ignorance' in U.S. Could Bring Dictatorship" (reply to SteveG, above)
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Yes, yes, yes. I will get no pleasure from saying, I told you so.

<a href="#">20120918-20</a>	16:21	SteveG	Cartoons: Where Did I Put Those Instructions?
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Cartoonists weigh in on Romney caught on video telling donors 47% of Americans are "dependent" on the government. Ouch! (<http://www.cagle.com/news/romney-video-leak/>)

20120918-22 17:00 SteveG Fw: "Poll: Bachmann in Danger" (from Jim Graves for Congress—MN)

Please pass this on to your Minnesota friends.

Jim Graves is running against Michele Bachman. She is only polling two points ahead of him. He needs to be supported to get that Joe McCarthy type out of office.

from Jim Graves for Minnesota Congressman:

"Poll: Bachmann in Danger" by Alex Seitz-Wald, Salon

Sept. 11, 2012, (<http://jimgraves.com/2012/09/11/poll-bachmann-in-danger/>)

Despite her national fan base and a massive war chest, Rep. Michele Bachmann may be in more danger than most suspect, with a new poll showing her lead diminished to just 2 points. Independent voters have swung against her by nearly 20 points in just two months, from a 4 percent advantage to a 15 point disadvantage. The internal poll, conducted by Democratic pollsters Greenberg Quinlan Rosner at the behest of Democrat Jim Graves' campaign and shared with Salon, shows that Bachmann's favorability rating has tumbled since their last survey in mid-June, and finds Graves gaining ground with independents as his name recognition grows.

Overall, the poll shows Bachmann leading Graves 48-46 percent, within the margin of error. The race has moved significantly among independents, with a 20-point net shift toward Graves, from a 41-45 percent disadvantage in June to a 52-37 percent lead now. Among independents, Bachmann's favorability rating has slipped 4 points while her unfavorability rating has jumped 7 points. Overall, she's viewed mostly negatively. Among all voters, 40 percent give her a positive job rating, while a sizable 57 percent give her a negative one, with a plurality of 35 percent giving the most negative answer possible — "poor."

Graves' campaign manager (and son) Adam Graves told Salon that the numbers show his candidate is well positioned to beat Bachmann. "Obviously, we're very excited about it. The first thing that's notable is that obviously her recent comments, the stories that she's created for herself, have really hurt her among folks in the middle," he said. Bachmann, who had tried to keep a lower profile after aborting her presidential bid, grabbed headlines this summer for her implication that Muslims in the U.S. government may be secret agents of the Muslim Brotherhood.

As we argued last month, Graves has the best shot at beating Bachmann of any Democrat since the congresswoman was first elected in 2006, thanks in large part to the absence of a third-party candidate. In previous races, those candidates have captured as much as 10 percent of the vote, siphoning votes away from the challenger. While some observers were skeptical that much of that 10 percent would break toward a Democrat, the Graves campaign said the new poll shows clearly that that fear has not materialized, as independents are moving toward its candidate.

20120918-23 17:20 Pam Re: "Poll: Bachmann in Danger" (reply to SteveG, above)

How is it possible that Michele Bachmann is even a candidate, let alone ahead in the polls? And I thought Minnesota was one of our enlightened states.

20120918-28 19:31 Art American Exceptionalism

[This is what Art wrote as introduction to a forwarding of the three articles mentioned, which can also be found in the FotM Newsletter, of course. :-) —SteveB]

These are three separate articles. The first is written by a High school classmate (has anyone else noticed the right just sends out packaged pretty much hate mail but never actually composes anything themselves, the left, not so much). It takes Romney's own words and dissects what they mean. You may or may not agree, but it is spot on. The other two articles address American Exceptionalism. Many on the right take great umbrage and accuse the President of somehow denigrating America by questioning our pride or maybe arrogance. I'm not sure I buy any of that, but regardless, it always pays to look at the facts. If you just pat yourself on the back and proclaim your greatness without empirical data to support it, well you're really just a bag of wind. More importantly you'll never get any better.

20120918-29 23:00 SteveB From the Right: "Time for an Intervention"

I would only add that when you've proven over and over again that you are a liar, it's pretty hard to get people to start believing you. How can Romney overcome that? I'm sure the attempt will be made to resuscitate his campaign with more lies. Betcha!

And from the Karl Rove playbook: "Obama is a redistributionist (so?), soft of terror and Arabs (reality proves otherwise), and is a threat to Social Security, Medicare, and the economy (I guess they've finally given up on the not-born-here Muslim stuff, huh?)."

Right, Mitt, and you'd be so much better! LOL!

"Time for an Intervention" by Peggy Noonan, the *Wall Street Journal*

Sept. 18, 2012, (<http://blogs.wsj.com/peggynoonan/2012/09/18/time-for-an-intervention/?mod=e2tw>)

What should Mitt Romney do now? He should peer deep into the abyss. He should look straight into the heart of darkness where lies a Republican defeat in a year the Republican presidential candidate almost couldn't lose. He should imagine what it will mean for the country, for a great political philosophy, conservatism, for his party and, last, for himself. He must look down unblinkingly.

And then he needs to snap out of it, and move.

He has got seven weeks. He's just had two big flubs. On the Mideast he seemed like a political opportunist, not big and wise but small and tinny. It mattered because the crisis was one of those moments when people look at you and imagine you as president.

Then his comments released last night and made months ago at the private fundraiser in Boca Raton, Fla. Mr. Romney has relearned what four years ago Sen. Barack Obama learned: There's no such thing as private when you're a candidate with a mic. There's someone who doesn't like you in that audience. There's someone with a cellphone. Mr. Obama's clinger comments became famous in 2008 because when people heard what he'd said, they thought, "That's the real him, that's him when he's talking to his friends."

And so a quick denunciation of what Mr. Romney said, followed by some ideas.

The central problem revealed by the tape is Romney's theory of the 2012 election. It is that a high percentage of the electorate receives government checks and therefore won't vote for him, another high percentage is supplying the tax revenues and will vote for him, and almost half the people don't pay taxes and presumably won't vote for him.

My goodness, that's a lot of people who won't vote for you. You wonder how he gets up in the morning.

This is not how big leaders talk, it's how shallow campaign operatives talk: They slice and dice the electorate like that, they see everything as determined by this interest or that. They're usually young enough and dumb enough that nobody holds it against them, but they don't know anything. They don't know much about America.

We are a big, complicated nation. And we are human beings. We are people. We have souls. We are complex. We are not data points. Many things go into our decisions and our political affiliations.

You have to be sophisticated to know that. And if you're operating at the top of national politics, you're supposed to be sophisticated.

I wrote recently of an imagined rural Ohio woman sitting on her porch, watching the campaign go by. She's 60, she identifies as conservative, she likes guns, she thinks the culture has gone crazy. She doesn't like Obama. Romney looks OK. She's worried about the national debt and what it will mean to her children. But she's having a hard time, things are tight for her right now, she's on partial disability, and her husband is a vet and he gets help, and her mother receives Social Security.

She's worked hard and paid into the system for years. Her husband fought for his country.

And she's watching this whole election and thinking. You can win her vote if you give her faith in your fairness and wisdom. But not if you label her and dismiss her.

As for those workers who don't pay any income taxes, they pay payroll taxes—Social Security and Medicare. They want to rise in the world and make more money. They'd like to file a 1040 because that will mean they got a raise or a better job.

They too are potential Romney voters, because they're suffering under the no-growth economy.

So: Romney's theory of the case is all wrong. His understanding of the political topography is wrong.

And his tone is fatalistic. *I can't win these guys who will only vote their economic interests, but I can win these guys who will vote their economic interests, plus some guys in the middle, whoever they are.*

That's too small and pinched and narrow. That's not how Republicans emerge victorious—"I can't win these guys." You have to have more respect than that, and more affection, you don't write anyone off, you invite everyone in. Reagan in 1984 used to put out his hand: "Come too, come walk with me." Come join, come help, whatever is happening in your life.

You know what Romney sounded like? Like a kid new to politics who thinks he got the inside lowdown on how it works from some operative. But those old operatives, they never know how it works. They knew how it worked for one cycle back in the day.

They're jockeys who rode Seabiscuit and thought they won a race.

The big issue—how we view government, what we want from it, what we need, what it rightly asks of us, what it wrongly demands of us—is a good and big and right and serious subject. It has to be dealt with seriously, at some length. And it is in part a cultural conversation. There's a lot of grievance out there, and a sense of entitlement in many spheres. A lot of people don't feel confident enough or capable enough to be taking part in the big national drama of Work in America. Why? What's going on? That's a conversation worth having.

I think there is a broad and growing feeling now, among Republicans, that this thing is slipping out of Romney's hands. Today at a speech in New York with what seemed like many conservatives and Republicans in the audience, I said more or less the above. I wondered if anyone would say, in the Q&A, "I think you've got it wrong, you're too pessimistic." No one did. A woman asked me to talk about why in a year the Republicans couldn't lose, the Republican candidate seems to be losing.

I said pre-mortems won't help, if you want to help the more conservative candidate, it's a better use of your time to pitch in with ideas. There's seven weeks to go. This isn't over, it's possible to make things better.

Republicans are going to have to right this thing. They have to stabilize it.

It's time to admit the Romney campaign is an incompetent one. It's not big, it's not brave, it's not thoughtfully tackling great issues. It's always been too small for the moment. All the activists, party supporters and big donors should be pushing for change. People want to focus on who at the top is least constructive and most responsible. Fine, but Mitt Romney is no puppet: He chooses who to listen to. An intervention is in order. "Mitt, this isn't working."

Romney is known to be loyal. He sticks with you when you're going through a hard time, he rides it down with you. That's a real personal quality, a virtue. My old boss Reagan was a little colder. The night before he won the crucial 1980 New Hampshire primary—the night before he *won* it—he fired his campaign manager, John Sears. Reagan thought he wasn't cutting it, so he was gone. The economist Martin Anderson once called Reagan genially ruthless, and he was. But then it wasn't about John Sears's feelings or Ronald Reagan's feelings, it was about America. You can be pretty tough when it's about America.

Romney doesn't seem to be out there campaigning enough. He seems—in this he is exactly like the president—to always be disappearing into fund-raisers, and not having enough big public events.

But the logic of Romney's fundraising has seemed, for some time, slightly crazy. He's raising money so he can pile it in at the end, with ads. But at the end will they make much difference? Obama is said to have used a lot of his money early on, to paint a portrait of Romney as Thurston Howell III, as David Brooks put it. That was a gamble on Obama's part: spend it now, pull ahead in the battlegrounds, once we pull ahead more money will come in because money follows winners, not losers.

If I'm seeing things right, that strategy is paying off.

Romney's staff used to brag they had a lower burn rate, they were saving it up. For what? For the moment when Americans would rather poke out their eyeballs and stomp on the goo than listen to another ad?

Also, Mr. Romney's ads are mostly boring. It's kind of an achievement to be boring at a moment in history like this, so credit where it's due: That *musta* taken effort!

When big, serious, thoughtful things must be said then big, serious, thoughtful speeches must be given. Mr. Romney is not good at press conferences. Maybe because he doesn't give enough, and so hasn't grown used to them, and confident.

He should stick to speeches, and they have to be big—where America is now, what we must do, how we can do it. He needs to address the Mideast too, because it isn't going to go away as an issue and is adding a new layer of unease to the entire election. Luckily, Romney has access to some of the best writers and thinkers in the business. I say it that way because to write is to think, and Romney needs fresh writing *and* fresh thinking.

*Romney needs to get serious here.* Or, he can keep typing out his stray thoughts with Stuart Stevens, who's sold himself as a kind of mad genius. I get the mad part.

Wake this election up. Wade into the crowd, wade into the fray, hold a hell of a rally in an American city—don't they count anymore? A big, dense city with skyscrapers like canyons, crowds and placards, and yelling. All of our campaigning now is in bland suburbs and tired hustings. How about: New York, New York, the city so nice they named it twice? You say the state's not in play? It's New York. Our media lives here, they'll make it big. How about downtown Brooklyn, full of new Americans? Guys—make it look like there's an election going on. Because there is.

Be serious and fight.

If you're gonna lose, lose honorably. If you're gonna win do it with meaning.

Romney always seems alone out there, a guy with a mic pacing an empty stage. All by himself, removed from the other humans. It's sad-looking. It's not working.

Time for the party to step up. Romney should go out there every day surrounded with the most persuasive, interesting and articulate members of his party, the old ones, and I say this with pain as they're my age, like Mitch Daniels and Jeb Bush, and the young ones, like Susana Martinez and Chris Christie and Marco Rubio—and even Paul Ryan. I don't mean one of them should travel with him next Thursday, I mean he should be surrounded by a posse of them every day. Their presence will say, "This isn't about one man, this is about a whole world of meaning, this is about a conservative political philosophy that can turn things around and make our country better."

Some of them won't want to do it because they're starting to think Romney's a loser and they don't want to get loser on them. Too bad. They should be embarrassed if they don't go, and try, and work, and show support for the conservative candidate at a crucial moment. Do they stand for something or not? Is it bigger than them or not?

Party elders, to the extent you exist this is why you exist:

Right this ship.

So, these are some ideas. Others will have more, and they'll be better.

But an intervention is needed.

20120918-30 23:58 Marci Photo: '...the Mother of Invention' #5



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