



# Snickler-Do

## **FRIENDS OF THE MIDDLE** **OCTOBER, 2012 NEWSLETTERS**

Edited by Steven W. Baker for FRIENDS OF THE MIDDLE

**FRIENDS OF THE MIDDLE**  
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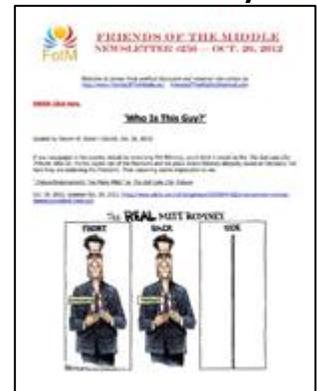
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<a href="#"><u>20120928-09</u></a>	17:33	Ben	Re: Stock Market (reply to SteveB, above)
<a href="#"><u>20120928-11</u></a>	17:38	SteveB	Re: Stock Market (reply to Ben, above)
<a href="#"><u>20120928-12</u></a>	17:44	Ben	Re: Stock Market (reply to SteveB, above)
<a href="#"><u>20120929-07</u></a>	22:56	SteveB	Graphic: No Swing States Left?
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<a href="#"><u>20121001-01</u></a>	12:46	SteveB	"Fire Congress, Vote Out Incumbents"
<a href="#"><u>20121002-03</u></a>	07:01	MarthaH	Re: "Fire Congress, Vote Out Incumbents" (reply to SteveB, FotM Newsletter #238)
<a href="#"><u>20121003-06</u></a>	13:29	Pam	Re: "Fire Congress, Vote Out Incumbents" (reply to MarthaH, FotM Newsletter #239)
<a href="#"><u>20121001-05</u></a>	17:45	SteveB	"The Blowout Scenario Following a Possible Obama Landslide"
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<a href="#"><u>20121008-03</u></a>	08:55	MarthaH	Cartoon: Have You Ever Seen One?
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<a href="#"><u>20121023-08</u></a>	23:31	Tom	"International Monitors at U.S. Polling Spots Draw Criticism from Voter Fraud Groups"
<a href="#"><u>20121024-11</u></a>	10:32	Ben	Re: "International Monitors at U.S. Polling Spots Draw Criticism from Voter Fraud Groups" (reply to Tom, FotM Newsletter #254)
<a href="#"><u>20121024-02</u></a>	05:21	MarthaH	"Supreme Court Makeup Not a Top Campaign Issue"
<a href="#"><u>20121024-05</u></a>	09:29	Pam	Re: "Supreme Court Makeup Not a Top Campaign Issue" (reply to MarthaH, above)
<a href="#"><u>20121024-07</u></a>	09:30	SteveB	Re: "Supreme Court Makeup Not a Top Campaign Issue" (reply to Pam, above)
<a href="#"><u>20121024-13</u></a>	11:05	Art	Re: "Supreme Court Makeup Not a Top Campaign Issue" (reply to SteveB, above)
<a href="#"><u>20121024-16</u></a>	11:13	Pam	Re: "Supreme Court Makeup Not a Top Campaign Issue" (reply to Art, above)
<a href="#"><u>20121025-06</u></a>	17:36	MarthaH	"2012 Voters: The Deepest Racial Split Since '88"
<a href="#"><u>20121025-07</u></a>	17:51	Pam	Re: "2012 Voters: The Deepest Racial Split Since '88" (reply to MarthaH, above)
<a href="#"><u>20121026-01</u></a>	07:05	MarthaH	"The Swift Boaters Are Back for 2012"
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<a href="#"><u>20121027-09</u></a>	18:42	Pam	Re: The Golden Urinal (reply to MarthaH, above)
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<a href="#"><u>20120930-07</u></a>	22:19	Tom	"Nader Calls Obama a 'War Criminal'"
<a href="#"><u>20121002-01</u></a>	05:17	SteveB	"Republicans Finally Admit Silliness of Obama TelePrompTer Caricature"

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<a href="#">20121005-01</a>	08:59	Lianne	"President Obama's Take on Last Night's Debate (You're Going to LOVE This)"
<a href="#">20121006-01</a>	15:28	Dick	Fw: Fox News
<a href="#">20121008-01</a>	05:55	Tom	Fw: Video: Obama's Second Term Tax Plans (by Dick Morris TV)
<a href="#">20121009-02</a>	11:54	Pam	Re: Video: Obama's Second Term Tax Plans (reply to Tom, FotM Newsletter #243)
<a href="#">20121009-07</a>	21:29	Tom	"The Post-Constitutional President"
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<a href="#">20121010-01</a>	09:31	Pam	Re: "The Post-Constitutional President" (reply to Tom, FotM Newsletter #244)
<a href="#">20121010-05</a>	19:03	SteveB	"Repeat After Me: Obama Cut the Deficit and Slowed Spending to Lowest Level in 50 Years"
<a href="#">20121017-00</a>		SteveB	<b>Barack!</b> by Steven W. Baker / SteveB ("Presidential Debate: Obama Snaps Back Hard" & "Obama Outsources Romney" & "Romney vs. Obama Was a Nauseating Draw & Both Deserve to Lose")
<a href="#">20121020-01</a>	07:28	MarthaH	Annenberg List of Lying Internet Rumors
<a href="#">20121022-03</a>	12:17	Tom	Video: "Obama Kept Us Safe"
<a href="#">20121022-05</a>	13:14	Tom	Cartoon: Storybook Endings
<a href="#">20121022-07</a>	13:27	Tom	Graphic: Anti-Obama #1
<a href="#">20121029-08</a>	23:58	Tom	Anti-Obama Graphic: You've Been Warned #2
<a href="#">20121030-16</a>	23:58	Tom	Anti-Obama Graphic: You've Been Warned #3
<a href="#">20121026-02</a>	08:15	Art	Graphic: "Why I Support Obama—"
<a href="#">20121026-03</a>	09:33	SteveB	Re: "Why I Support Obama—" (rely to Art, above)
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<a href="#">20121001-00</a>		SteveB	<b>Ann Romney's Endorsement?</b> by Steven W. Baker / SteveB ("Ann Romney: Biggest Fear Is for Mitt's 'Mental Well-Being'" w/ video)
<a href="#">20120928-04</a>	12:32	SteveB	"The Three Moments That Wrecked the Romney Campaign and their Common Thread: Conservatism"
<a href="#">20120928-14</a>	19:01	SteveB	"Mitt's Campaign-Killing Snobbery"
<a href="#">20120928-15</a>	19:53	SteveB	Business Management 101 (to Republicans) & "Five Signs Mitt Romney's Campaign Is Crumbling"
<a href="#">20120929-02</a>	07:27	SteveB	"Why Mitt Romney Is the Perfect GOP Candidate"
<a href="#">20120929-03</a>	07:57	Pam	"Transaction Man"
<a href="#">20120929-04</a>	08:04	SteveB	"The Most Damning Line in the Secret Romney Video"
<a href="#">20120930-08</a>	23:01	SteveB	"Mitt Romney's Real Agenda"
<a href="#">20121002-00</a>		SteveB	<b>How the Cookie Crumbles</b> by Steven W. Baker / SteveB ("Michelle Obama Wins Cookie Contest" & "Mitt Romney Would Rather Starve Than Touch That Mass-Produced Poor-Person Cookie")
<a href="#">20121001-03</a>	14:46	SteveB	"The Federal Bailout That Saved Mitt Romney"
<a href="#">20121004-04</a>	13:44	SteveB	"Mitt Romney: Lying to Victory"
<a href="#">20121009-04</a>	12:26	SteveB	"Highly Debatable: The Big Liar's Biggest Lies"
<a href="#">20121018-00</a>		SteveB	<b>The Plethora of Disqualifying Lies Itemized</b> by Steven W. Baker / SteveB ("Mitt Romney's Entirely Untrue, Objectively False Statements" & "Romney Proudly Explains How He's Turned Campaign Around: 'I'm Lying More,' He Says")
<a href="#">20121017-03</a>	15:44	Pam	Re: The Plethora of Disqualifying Lies Itemized (reply to SteveB, above)
<a href="#">20121017-06</a>	18:24	Art	Re: The Plethora of Disqualifying Lies Itemized (reply to Pam, above)

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<a href="#">20121017-07</a>	19:17	MarthaH	"Romney Challenged on How He Got the Binder Full of Women Managers"
<a href="#">20121017-11</a>	20:29	Pam	Re: "Romney Challenged on How He Got the Binder Full of Women Managers" (reply to MarthaH, above)
<a href="#">20121017-09</a>	19:35	SteveB	Re: "Romney Challenged on How He Got the Binder Full of Women Managers" (reply to MarthaH, above)
<a href="#">20121017-12</a>	20:32	Pam	Re: "Romney Challenged on How He Got the Binder Full of Women Managers" (reply to SteveB, above)
<a href="#">20121018-02</a>	09:37	Art	R0mney's Tax Plan
<a href="#">20121026-00</a>		SteveB	<b>'Who Is This Guy?'</b> by Steven W. Baker / SteveB ("Tribune Endorsement: Too Many Mitts")
<a href="#">20121027-06</a>	16:28	Art	Video: "Still Voting For 'Mitt Romney'?"
<a href="#">20121027-07</a>	17:13	Art	"Republicans Filibuster Everything, Romney Blames Obama for Not Working with Congress"
<a href="#">20121028-02</a>	10:04	Art	Fw: Graphic: Romney's Tax Plan
<a href="#">20121029-02</a>	12:26	Ben	"Check Out Joss Whedon's Hilarious Mitt Zombie Spoof"
<a href="#">20121031-00</a>		SteveB	<b>Let the States (or the 'Private Sector') Do It?</b> by Steven W. Baker / SteveB ("How Would the Paul Ryan Budget Handle Disaster Relief?" & "Mitt Romney's Argument for Shutting Down FEMA Ripped in <i>New York Times</i> Editorial")
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<a href="#">20121001-04</a>	17:35	SteveB	Quote: Andy Borowitz on Paul Ryan
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<a href="#">20121010-06</a>	20:23	Dick	Fw: A Very Evil Human (George Soros)
<a href="#">20121010-07</a>	20:49	SteveB	Re: A Very Evil Human (reply to Dick, above)
<a href="#">20121011-01</a>	10:45	Pam	Re: A Very Evil Human (reply to Dick, FotM Newsletter #245)
<a href="#">20121012-00</a>		SteveB	<b>Media of Lies</b> by Steven W. Baker / SteveB ("Ever Wonder Where the Extreme Right's Conspiracy Theories and Paranoid Rumors Get Started? Meet WorldNetDaily")
<a href="#">20121025-00</a>		SteveB	<b>The Evil God of Conservatives</b> by Steven W. Baker / SteveB ("Richard Mourdock on Abortion: Pregnancy from Rape Is 'Something God Intended'")
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<a href="#">20121024-10</a>	09:58	Pam	Re: The Evil God of Conservatives (reply to SteveB, above)
<a href="#">20121024-12</a>	11:02	Art	Re: The Evil God of Conservatives (reply to Pam, above)
<a href="#">20121024-17</a>	12:23	SteveB	Re: The Evil God of Conservatives (reply to all, above)
<a href="#">20121024-18</a>	12:25	Pam	Re: The Evil God of Conservatives (reply to SteveB, above)
<a href="#">20121024-19</a>	12:52	Phil	Re: The Evil God of Conservatives (reply to all, above)
<a href="#">20121024-22</a>	16:36	Art	Re: The Evil God of Conservatives (reply to all, above)
<a href="#">20121028-01</a>	09:57	Art	"WND Columnist: Prosecute Liberals, Journalists for Treason"
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<a href="#">20121020-04</a>	17:46	Pam	Re: "The Onion Endorses John Edwards for President" (reply to SteveB, above)
<a href="#">20121020-05</a>	18:17	SteveB	Re: "The Onion Endorses John Edwards for President" (reply to Pam, above)

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<a href="#">20121021-02</a>	12:14	SteveB	Re: "The Onion Endorses John Edwards for President" (reply to Pam, above)
<a href="#">20121023-07</a>	23:22	Tom	Cartoon: Bill Clinton—All in a Day's Work
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<a href="#">20121004-02</a>	11:14	SandyI	Graphics: Bumper Stickers for Progressive Thinkers
<a href="#">20121004-03</a>	11:27	Pam	Re: Graphics: Bumper Stickers for Progressive Thinkers (reply to SandyI, above)
<a href="#">20121010-00</a>		SteveB	<b>Home of the Brave</b> by Steven W. Baker / SteveB ("The Siren Call of Starting Over" & Poem: "Dreams Hold Strong")
<a href="#">20121016-00</a>		MarthaH	<b>My Political Muse...</b> by MarthaH
<a href="#">20121015-01</a>	09:04	Pam	Re: My Political Muse... (reply to MarthaH, above)
<a href="#">20121015-06</a>	18:39	Art	Re: My Political Muse... (reply to Pam & MarthaH, above)
<a href="#">20121015-08</a>	10:48	SandyI	Re: My Political Muse... (reply to Art, above)
<a href="#">20121016-01</a>	08:24	Pam	Re: My Political Muse... (reply to Art, FotM Newsletter #248)
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<a href="#">20121027-03</a>	10:56	SandtI	Re: "AP Poll: Majority Harbor Prejudice Against Blacks" (reply to MarthaH, above)
<a href="#">20121027-04</a>	11:22	Pam	Re: "AP Poll: Majority Harbor Prejudice Against Blacks" (reply to MarthaH, above)
<a href="#">20121027-05</a>	15:58	Art	Re: "AP Poll: Majority Harbor Prejudice Against Blacks" (reply to all, above)
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<a href="#">20120928-17</a>	23:57	Art	Re: Clint Eastwood (reply to SandyI, above)
<a href="#">20121017-08</a>	19:30	SteveB	Video: FDR Warning About Today's Republicans in 1936
<a href="#">20121017-15</a>	23:55	SteveB	Quote: Hunter S. Thompson on Republicans
<a href="#">20121024-21</a>	15:35	Ben	"The Donald' Trumps Even Himself for Idiocy"
<a href="#">20121024-23</a>	16:38	Lianne	Eisenhower's "Cross of Iron" Speech
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<a href="#">20121025-02</a>	06:53	MarthaH	"Arizona Ballot Measure Contests Ownership of the Grand Canyon"
<a href="#">20121025-03</a>	08:51	Art	Re: "Arizona Ballot Measure Contests Ownership of the Grand Canyon" (reply to MarthaH, above)
<a href="#">20121025-04</a>	08:55	Pam	Re: "Arizona Ballot Measure Contests Ownership of the Grand Canyon" (reply to MarthaH, above)
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<a href="#">20120929-06</a>	14:52	Dennis	Video: "Green Party Presidential Forum: Roseanne Barr & Jill Stein"
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<a href="#">20121009-00</a>		SteveB	<b>Money Problems</b> by Steven W. Baker / SteveB ("The Illegal Donor Loophole")
<a href="#">20121025-01</a>	06:15	MarthaH	"Obscure Nonprofit Threatens Campaign Finance Limits Beyond Montana"
<b>(12) EDUCATION</b>			
<a href="#">20120928-03</a>	11:40	Bill	Quote: Carl Sagan on Education in America
<a href="#">20120928-07</a>	15:31	SteveB	Re: Quote: Carl Sagan on Education in America (reply to Bill, above)
<a href="#">20121010-03</a>	14:43	SteveB	"Fort Wayne Makes a Revolutionary Transformation"
<a href="#">20121010-04</a>	15:20	Pam	"No, You're Not Entitled to Your Opinion"
<a href="#">20121018-01</a>	05:25	MarthaH	Photo: The Future of Education: How Cold!
<a href="#">20121018-03</a>	09:41	Pam	Re: Photo: The Future of Education: How Cold! (reply to MarthaH, above)
<a href="#">20121018-04</a>	11:15	Art	Re: Photo: The Future of Education: How Cold! (reply to MarthaH & Pam, above)
<a href="#">20121018-05</a>	12:39	Pam	Re: Photo: The Future of Education: How Cold! (reply to Art, above)
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<a href="#">20121020-02</a>	11:54	SteveB	Re: Election Fraud (reply to Pam, above)
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<a href="#">20120930-05</a>	18:11	Tom	"Speak Up: US Law Enforcement to Use Russian Software to Store Millions of Voices"
<a href="#">20121002-04</a>	08:28	SteveB	Fw: From the Right: <i>Guns &amp; Patriots</i> Editor's Note for Oct. 2, 2012
<a href="#">20121017-01</a>	06:46	Tom	"An Honest Debate About Gun Violence"
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<a href="#">20121009-03</a>	11:59	Pam	Re: "The Maimed" (reply to SteveB, FotM Newsletter #243)
<a href="#">20121022-08</a>	13:35	Tom	Fw: "Ghosts of War: Artist Superimposes World War II Photographs on to Modern Pictures of the Same Street Scenes"
<a href="#">20121022-11</a>	16:05	Ben	Re: "Ghosts of War..." (reply to Tom, above)
<a href="#">20121024-24</a>	19:31	Bob&BettyW	Fw: Future Terrorism
<a href="#">20121024-26</a>	21:55	SteveB	Re: Future Terrorism (Reply to Bob&BettyW, above)
<a href="#">20121025-05</a>	13:22	Art	Re: Future Terrorism (reply to SteveB & Bob&BettyW, FotM Newsletter #255)
<b>(26) ART / LITERATURE / WRITING / MOVIES / MUSIC</b>			
<b>(27) BUSINESS / MONEY / ECONOMICS</b>			
<a href="#">20121002-05</a>	11:00	SteveB	"Unresolved Fiscal Cliff Could Raise Taxes for 90 Percent of U.S. Families" & "Fiscal Cliff Countdown"
<a href="#">20121011-02</a>	12:26	SteveB	"Why is America 'The Sole Bright Spot' in World Economy?"
<a href="#">20121015-00</a>		SteveB	<b>An Interesting Little Ride Over the Cliff</b> by Steven W. Baker / SteveB ("How January's Fiscal Cliff Turns Into a Gentle Hill by February (or March)")
<a href="#">20121014-02</a>	11:13	SteveB	"Why Conservatives Don't Really Want the U.S. to Run Like a Business"
<a href="#">20121014-03</a>	12:28	SteveB	"Who Hijacked the World's Greatest Economy?"
<a href="#">20121015-02</a>	09:15	SteveB	"Life of a Salesman: Selling Success When the American Dream Is Downsized"
<a href="#">20121019-03</a>	14:01	Pam	Fw: Interesting Thoughts...
<a href="#">20121025-08</a>	18:04	Ben	"The Best Presidents for the Economy"
<b>(28) CLASS WAR / POVERTY / RICH &amp; POOR</b>			
<a href="#">20120929-01</a>	07:06	MarthaH	"Poll: Who Would Thrive Depends on Who Wins in 2012"
<a href="#">20120929-05</a>	12:25	SteveB	Graphic: "Money Masters"
<a href="#">20121021-03</a>	12:27	SteveB	"The New Pot Barons"
<b>(29) DAILY PHOTOS / PHOTOGRAPHY</b>			
<a href="#">20120930-09</a>	23:59	SteveB	Photo: <i>iQué magníficas!</i>
<a href="#">20121001-06</a>	23:59	SteveB	Photo: Indiana Dunes State Park
<a href="#">20121002-07</a>	23:59	SteveB	Photo: Red Tiger Grouper
<a href="#">20121003-12</a>	23:59	SteveB	Photo: Emmett Kelly
<a href="#">20121004-08</a>	23:59	SteveB	Photo: Steamroller
<a href="#">20121003-11</a>	19:28	Marci	Fw: Photos: Rescued Squirrel
<a href="#">20121007-03</a>	23:59	SteveB	Photo: Sucre, Bolivia
<a href="#">20121008-09</a>	23:59	SteveB	Photo: St. Ignatius, Montana
<a href="#">20121009-09</a>	23:59	SteveB	Photos: Thomas Moran's "Ulysses & the Sirens" & "Grand Canyon of the Yellowstone"
<a href="#">20121010-10</a>	23:59	SteveB	Photo: 'Starry Night' (Hubble)
<a href="#">20121011-03</a>	23:59	SteveB	Photo: Dunbar Cave, Clarksville, Tennessee
<a href="#">20121013-02</a>	19:52	Marci	Photo: Special Moments #1
<a href="#">20121015-09</a>	23:58	Marci	Photos: Special Moments #2
<a href="#">20121016-08</a>	23:58	Marci	Photo: Special Moments #3

<b>DATE-ID</b>	<b>TIME</b>	<b>FROM</b>	<b>SUBJECT/TITLE</b>
<a href="#">20121017-14</a>	23:50	Marci	Photo: Special Moments #4
<a href="#">20121018-08</a>	23:58	Marci	Photo: Special Moments #5
<a href="#">20121021-05</a>	23:58	Marci	Photo: Special Moments #6
<a href="#">20121023-09</a>	23:57	Marci	Photo: Special Moments #7
<a href="#">20121024-27</a>	23:57	Marci	Photo: Special Moments #8
<a href="#">20121025-10</a>	23:57	Marci	Photo: Special Moments #9
<a href="#">20121028-06</a>	23:57	Marci	Photo: Special Moments #10
<a href="#">20121029-06</a>	23:56	Marci	Photo: Special Moments #11
<a href="#">20121030-14</a>	23:56	Marci	Photo: Special Moments #12
<a href="#">20121014-05</a>	23:59	SteveB	Photo: The Great Gulf, White Mountains, New Hampshire
<a href="#">20121015-10</a>	23:59	SteveB	Photo: Infinity Pool at Anse Chastenet Resort, St. Lucia
<a href="#">20121016-09</a>	23:59	SteveB	Photo: Hofstra University Grounds, Hempstead, New York
<a href="#">20121018-09</a>	23:59	SteveB	Photo: "Truth Is Beauty" Climable Sculpture
<a href="#">20121021-06</a>	23:59	SteveB	Photo: Beach on Zakynthos, Greece
<a href="#">20121022-15</a>	23:59	SteveB	Photo: A Crack in the Earth
<a href="#">20121023-11</a>	23:59	SteveB	Photo: Pitbull
<a href="#">20121024-29</a>	23:59	SteveB	Photo: Ike!
<a href="#">20121025-12</a>	23:59	SteveB	Photo: Shape Shifter (by William Bezek)
<a href="#">20121028-08</a>	23:59	SteveB	Photo: Cumulus Clouds & Crepuscular Rays
<a href="#">20121029-09</a>	23:59	SteveB	Photo: Hurricane Sandy Meets Another Powerful Lady
<a href="#">20121030-17</a>	23:59	SteveB	Photo: New York City Sunset
<b>(30) ENERGY / TRANSPORTATION / WATER</b>			
<a href="#">20121017-10</a>	20:28	SteveB	Amphibia
<a href="#">20121017-13</a>	22:25	Ben	Re: Amphibia (reply to SteveB, above)
<a href="#">20121022-12</a>	19:24	SteveB	"LiquidPiston Unveils 40-BHP X2 Rotary Engine with 75 Percent Thermal Efficiency"
<b>(31) FOOD / DRINK</b>			
<a href="#">20120928-06</a>	14:45	Ben	Photo: Today's Seafood Lunch at Apple
<a href="#">20121002-06</a>	14:32	Ben	Photo: Today's Seafood Lunch at Apple
<a href="#">20121003-07</a>	14:49	Ben	Photo: Today's Seafood Lunch at Apple
<a href="#">20121004-05</a>	14:04	Ben	Photo: Today's Seafood Lunch at Apple
<a href="#">20121005-02</a>	14:45	Ben	Photo: Today's Poultry Lunch at Apple
<a href="#">20121008-07</a>	15:24	Ben	Photo: Today's Seafood Lunch at Apple
<a href="#">20121009-05</a>	14:29	Ben	Photo: Today's Seafood Lunch at Apple
<a href="#">20121010-02</a>	14:40	Ben	Photo: Today's Seafood Lunch at Apple
<a href="#">20121012-01</a>	15:58	Ben	Photo: Today's Freshwater Lunch at Apple
<a href="#">20121015-04</a>	15:06	Ben	Photo: Today's Healthy Lunch at Apple
<a href="#">20121016-03</a>	14:15	Ben	Photo: Today's Seafood Lunch at Apple
<a href="#">20121017-02</a>	14:07	Ben	Photo: Today's Seafood Lunch at Apple
<a href="#">20121018-06</a>	16:04	Ben	Photo: Today's Seafood Lunch at Apple
<a href="#">20121019-05</a>	14:42	Ben	Photo: Today's Seafood Lunch at Apple
<a href="#">20121023-03</a>	11:50	Ben	Photo: Yesterday's Healthy Lunch at Apple
<a href="#">20121024-20</a>	13:52	Ben	Photos: Yesterday's & Today's Seafood Lunches at Apple
<a href="#">20121025-09</a>	19:01	Ben	Photo: Today's Seafood Lunch at Apple
<a href="#">20121026-04</a>	14:41	Ben	Photo: Today's Healthy Lunch at Apple
<a href="#">20121029-04</a>	14:22	Ben	Photo: Today's Healthy Lunch at Apple
<a href="#">20121030-11</a>	18:19	Ben	Photo: Today's Poultry Lunch at Apple
<a href="#">20121003-01</a>	09:37	Charis	Recipe: "Bolivian Rice Soup ( <i>Sopa de Arroz</i> )"
<a href="#">20121003-10</a>	18:52	Marci	Fw: <i>Chuchu</i> Fruit from Brazil

<u>DATE-ID</u>	<u>TIME</u>	<u>FROM</u>	<u>SUBJECT/TITLE</u>
<b>(32) FRIENDS OF THE MIDDLE</b>			
<a href="#">20120928-10</a>	17:35	SteveB	Our Latest Friends of the Middle eBook
<a href="#">20120928-13</a>	18:59	Pam	Re: Our Latest Friends of the Middle eBook (reply to SteveB, above)
<a href="#">20121008-05</a>	15:01	Pam	Re: FotM Newsletter #242 (reply to all)
<a href="#">20121014-04</a>	12:43	Bill	Reunion in Greencastle
<a href="#">20121016-02</a>	08:50	Pam	Photo: Son and Daughter-in-Law
<a href="#">20121019-02</a>	13:51	Art	Re: FotM Newsletter #250
<a href="#">20121019-04</a>	14:05	Pam	Re: FotM Newsletter #250
<a href="#">20121024-01</a>	05:05	MarthaH	Pens to Paper, So to Speak...
<a href="#">20121024-03</a>	08:05	SteveB	Happy Birthday! Thank You All!
<a href="#">20121024-08</a>	09:52	Pam	Re: Happy Birthday! Thank You All! (reply to SteveB, above)
<a href="#">20121024-15</a>	11:11	Art	Re: Happy Birthday! Thank You All! (reply to SteveB, above)
<b>(33) FUN / DIVERSION</b>			
<a href="#">20121008-00</a>		SteveB	<b>Maybe Someone You Know?</b> by Steven W. Baker / SteveB ("The A-Hole in the Mirror")
<a href="#">20121006-02</a>	19:36	Tom	Photo: Cheap iMac 2.0
<a href="#">20121008-08</a>	23:10	Marci	Fw: Men's Turn
<a href="#">20121010-08</a>	21:10	Marci	Fw: Joke: Ghosts
<a href="#">20121014-01</a>	00:56	Tom	Fw: Ice Cream
<a href="#">20121015-03</a>	10:24	MarthaH	Fw: A Clean Joke!
<a href="#">20121016-06</a>	16:51	SandyI	Video: Is This Woman for Real?
<a href="#">20121016-07</a>	17:19	Art	Re: Video: Is This Woman for Real? (reply to SandyI, above)
<a href="#">20121024-04</a>	08:21	MarthaH	Fw: British Humour
<a href="#">20121024-09</a>	09:55	Pam	Re: British Humour (reply to MarthaH, above)
<a href="#">20121024-14</a>	11:08	Art	Re: British Humour (reply to MarthaH, above)
<a href="#">20121029-01</a>	07:47	Marci	Cartoon: Stop Yelling Across the House
<b>(34) HEALTH CARE / HEALTH / MEDICINE</b>			
<a href="#">20120930-06</a>	21:49	Tom	"Obamacare Fines Kick In" & "Tax Penalty to Hit Nearly 6M Uninsured People"
<a href="#">20121004-07</a>	21:25	Marci	Fw: Stroke Identification
<a href="#">20121030-00</a>		SteveB	<b>Vote for Pot?</b> by Steven W. Baker / SteveB ("Why Legalizing Marijuana on Election Day Might Not Be a Good Idea")
<b>(35) HISTORY</b>			
<a href="#">20121007-01</a>	07:39	SteveB	"Men of Principle' & the Lost Art of Compromise"
<a href="#">20121008-02</a>	06:43	Tom	"6 Ridiculous Lies You Believe About the Founding of America"
<a href="#">20121009-01</a>	11:45	Pam	Re: "6 Ridiculous Lies You Believe About the Founding of America" (reply to Tom, FotM Newsletter #243)
<b>(36) JOBS / LABOR</b>			
<a href="#">20121029-05</a>	18:32	SteveB	"A Part-Time Life, as Hours Shrink & Shift"
<a href="#">20121030-06</a>	12:13	SteveB	Re: "A Part-Time Life, as Hours Shrink & Shift" (reply to Pam, above)
<a href="#">20121030-07</a>	12:41	Pam	Re: "A Part-Time Life, as Hours Shrink & Shift" (reply to SteveB, above)
<a href="#">20121030-02</a>	08:58	Pam	Re: "A Part-Time Life, as Hours Shrink & Shift" (reply to SteveB, FotM Newsletter #258)

<u>DATE-ID</u>	<u>TIME</u>	<u>FROM</u>	<u>SUBJECT/TITLE</u>
<b>(37) LIFE / PHILOSOPHY / SPIRITUALITY</b>			
<a href="#">20121002-02</a>	05:41	SteveB	"My Take: 'I'm Spiritual but Not Religious' Is a Cop-Out"
<a href="#">20121003-02</a>	10:53	Pam	Re: "My Take: 'I'm Spiritual but Not Religious' Is a Cop-Out" (reply to SteveB, FotM Newsletter #239)
<a href="#">20121003-03</a>	12:49	SteveB	Re: "My Take: 'I'm Spiritual but Not Religious' Is a Cop-Out" (reply to Pam, above)
<a href="#">20121003-05</a>	13:24	Pam	Re: "My Take: 'I'm Spiritual but Not Religious' Is a Cop-Out" (reply to SteveB, above)
<a href="#">20121003-08</a>	15:08	SteveB	Re: "My Take: 'I'm Spiritual but Not Religious' Is a Cop-Out" (reply to Pam, above)
<a href="#">20121003-09</a>	15:20	Pam	Re: "My Take: 'I'm Spiritual but Not Religious' Is a Cop-Out" (reply to SteveB, above)
<a href="#">20121016-04</a>	16:31	Art	Re: "My Take: 'I'm Spiritual but Not Religious' Is a Cop-Out" (reply to Pam, FotM Newsletter #240)
<a href="#">20121016-05</a>	16:41	Pam	Re: "My Take: 'I'm Spiritual but Not Religious' Is a Cop-Out" (reply to Art, above)
<a href="#">20121013-01</a>	15:03	SteveB	Fw: Hello
<a href="#">20121017-16</a>	23:59	SteveB	Photo: <i>Laissez les Bons Temps Rouler!</i>
<a href="#">20121019-00</a>		SteveB	<b>The Search for Truth &amp; Certainty</b> by Steven W. Baker / SteveB ("Karl Popper, the Enemy of Certainty")
<a href="#">20121019-01</a>	09:34	Pam	Re: The Search for Truth & Certainty (reply to SteveB, FotM Newsletter #251)
<a href="#">20121022-00</a>		SteveB	<b>'Where Do We Come From, Grandpa?'</b> by Steven W. Baker / SteveB ("Theistic Critiques of Atheism" & "Vilenkin's Cosmic Vision: A Review of <i>Many Worlds in One: The Search for Other Universes</i> by Alex Vilenkin" & "What Can You Really Know?")
<a href="#">20121022-02</a>	10:13	Pam	Re: 'Where Do We Come From, Grandpa?' (reply to SteveB, FotM Newsletter #252)
<a href="#">20121022-09</a>	14:31	Pam	Re: 'Where Do We Come From, Grandpa?' (reply to SteveB, FotM Newsletter #252)
<a href="#">20121022-10</a>	15:32	SteveB	Re: 'Where Do We Come From, Grandpa?' (reply to Pam, above)
<a href="#">20121022-13</a>	19:33	Pam	Re: 'Where Do We Come From, Grandpa?' (reply to SteveB, above)
<a href="#">20121023-01</a>	07:25	SteveB	Re: 'Where Do We Come From, Grandpa?' (reply to Pam, FotM Newsletter #253)
<a href="#">20121023-02</a>	11:00	Pam	Re: 'Where Do We Come From, Grandpa?' (reply to SteveB, above)
<a href="#">20121024-25</a>	20:05	Marissa	Re: 'Where Do We Come From, Grandpa?' (reply to SteveB, FotM Newsletter #252)
<a href="#">20121029-00</a>		SteveB	<b>God's Own Paradox</b> by Steven W. Baker / SteveB ("Murdock's Dilemma")
<b>(38) MEDIA / NEWS MEDIA</b>			
<a href="#">20120928-16</a>	20:18	SteveB	"Fox's Laughable Case for Romney"
<a href="#">20121009-06</a>	21:14	Tom	Cartoon: <i>The New York Times</i>
<a href="#">20121023-06</a>	20:38	SandyI	Cartoon: Fox News Characterizes the Last Debate
<a href="#">20121022-01</a>	06:09	SteveB	Fw: For Your Attention
<a href="#">20121023-04</a>	14:05	SteveB	Fw: ASSALAMU'ALAYKUM!!!!!!
<a href="#">20121027-01</a>	06:23	SteveB	Fw: Last Warning (2012)
<a href="#">20121028-03</a>	10:48	SteveB	Fw: GainD ea lsFor c e"
<a href="#">20121022-04</a>	13:03	Dennis	Graphic: Why We Can't Let Our Newspapers Go Out of Business #1
<a href="#">20121023-10</a>	23:58	Dennis	Graphics: Why We Can't Let Our Newspapers Go Out of Business #2
<a href="#">20121024-28</a>	23:58	Dennis	Graphics: Why We Can't Let Our Newspapers Go Out of Business #3

<b>DATE-ID</b>	<b>TIME</b>	<b>FROM</b>	<b>SUBJECT/TITLE</b>
<a href="#">20121025-11</a>	23:58	Dennis	Graphic: Why We Can't Let Our Newspapers Go Out of Business #4
<a href="#">20121028-07</a>	23:58	Dennis	Graphics: Why We Can't Let Our Newspapers Go Out of Business #5
<a href="#">20121029-07</a>	23:57	Dennis	Graphic: Why We Can't Let Our Newspapers Go Out of Business #6
<a href="#">20121030-15</a>	23:57	Dennis	Graphics: Why We Can't Let Our Newspapers Go Out of Business #7
<a href="#">20121028-05</a>	23:14	Tom	Graphic: You've Been Warned (Against Candy Crowley)
<b>(39) MISC. REALITY</b>			
<a href="#">20121022-14</a>	21:31	SandyI	Quotes: Gotta Share
<a href="#">20121029-03</a>	14:07	Art	Sad Loss ("Sandy Gains Power & Aims for Northeast")
<a href="#">20121030-01</a>	08:09	SteveB	Re: Sad Loss ("Sandy Gains Power & Aims for Northeast") (reply to Art, FotM Newsletter #258)
<a href="#">20121030-04</a>	09:28	Art	Re: Sad Loss ("Sandy Gains Power & Aims for Northeast") (reply to SteveB, above)
<a href="#">20121030-05</a>	11:38	SteveB	Re: Sad Loss ("Sandy Gains Power & Aims for Northeast") (reply to Art, above)
<a href="#">20121030-08</a>	13:41	Art	Re: Sad Loss ("Sandy Gains Power & Aims for Northeast") (reply to SteveB, above)
<a href="#">20121030-09</a>	15:16	SteveB	Re: Sad Loss ("Sandy Gains Power & Aims for Northeast") (reply to Art, above)
<a href="#">20121030-10</a>	15:29	Art	Re: Sad Loss ("Sandy Gains Power & Aims for Northeast") (reply to SteveB, above)
<b>(40) OCCUPY WALL ST.</b>			
<b>(41) PETITIONS / ACTIONS / CAUSES</b>			
<a href="#">20121015-05</a>	18:04	SteveB	Fw: Daily Kos Action: Help Make This Stephen Colbert Video Go Viral!
<b>(42) SCIENCE / TECHNOLOGY</b>			
<a href="#">20121011-00</a>		SteveB	<b>Universes 'Like Grains of Sand'</b> by Steven W. Baker / SteveB ("Welcome to the Multiverse")
<a href="#">20121015-07</a>	19:57	Marci	Fw: Doors
<a href="#">20121017-05</a>	16:36	Bill	Photo: Einstein Was Right #1
<a href="#">20121018-07</a>	23:57	Bill	Photos: Einstein Was Right #2
<a href="#">20121021-04</a>	23:57	Bill	Photos: Einstein Was Right #3
<a href="#">20121022-06</a>	13:23	Tom	Video: Space Shuttle <i>Endeavor's</i> Trek Across L.A.
<a href="#">20121030-12</a>	20:03	Marci	Video: "How to Get to Mars. Very Cool!"
<b>(43) U.S.A., THE</b>			
<b>(44) WORLD, THE</b>			
<a href="#">20120928-02</a>	09:35	SteveB	"François Hollande Opts to Punish French Rich with €20bn of New Taxes"
<a href="#">20120930-04</a>	17:41	Tom	"Russia Reasserts Ownership Over the North Pole"
<a href="#">20121001-02</a>	14:27	Charis	Video: "Plaza 24 de Septiembre, Santa Cruz, Bolivia"
<a href="#">20121004-01</a>	08:07	Charis	Slideshow: Santa Cruz, Bolivia
<a href="#">20121007-02</a>	23:45	SteveB	"Hugo Chavez Celebrates Re-Election in Venezuela"
<a href="#">20121010-09</a>	22:12	Charis	11 de Octubre - Día Internacional de la Niña y Día de la Mujer
<a href="#">20121023-05</a>	15:03	Charis	Santa Cruz Festival of Independent Alternative Music
<a href="#">20121028-04</a>	14:12	Charis	"Why Should Brazil Nuts Actually Be Called Bolivia Nuts?"

<b>DATE-ID</b>	<b>TIME</b>	<b>FROM</b>	<b>SUBJECT/TITLE</b>
<a href="#">20121030-03</a>	09:21	Charis	"Legend of the <i>Bibosi</i> and the <i>Motacú</i> "
<a href="#">20121030-13</a>	22:03	Charis	Video: "Extreme Downhill Trail: Descenso del Condor in La Paz, Bolivia"



## **FRIENDS OF THE MIDDLE** **NEWSLETTER #237 — OCT. 1, 2012**

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

**INDEX: Click here.**

### **Ann Romney's Endorsement?**

(posted by Steven W. Baker / SteveB, Oct. 1, 2012)

Wow! I'm so astounded I don't even know what to say. Normally a candidate's wife would stand behind her husband 100%, like Michelle Obama does. But here's Mrs. Romney, stating unequivocally that her number one worry if Mitt became President would be his mental health.

As blogger Julie Kent put it: "Ann's lack of confidence in her husband's ability to handle the job as the President of the United States isn't likely to instill confidence in voters." (<http://bstewbiesretreat.runboard.com/p9958>)

I guess Ann doesn't want Mitt to be President either, or she might have kept her trap shut on this particular subject. Poor Mittens!



"Ann Romney: Biggest Fear Is for Mitt's 'Mental Well-Being'" (w/ video) by Reuters

Sept. 28, 2012, ([http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/09/28/mitt-romney-mental-well-being\\_n\\_1924622.html?utm\\_hp\\_ref=politics](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/09/28/mitt-romney-mental-well-being_n_1924622.html?utm_hp_ref=politics))

(WASHINGTON) Ann Romney told a Nevada television station her biggest concern if her husband, Republican presidential candidate Mitt Romney, becomes president was his "mental well-being."

In an interview Thursday with television station KTVN, Mrs. Romney was asked what her biggest worry was should Mitt Romney be elected to serve in the White House.

**"I think my biggest concern *obviously* would just be for his mental well-being,"** she said. "I have all the confidence in the world in his ability, in his decisiveness, in his leadership skills, in his understanding of the economy. ... So for me I think it would just be the emotional part of it."

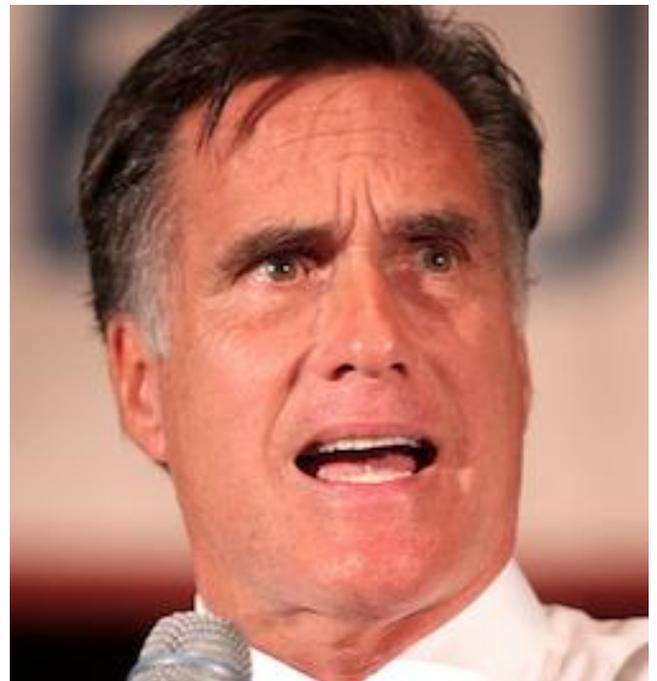
["Obviously!" –SteveB]

Mrs. Romney has been campaigning hard for her husband, with some bumps in the road. She had minor surgery on her right hand recently, making it difficult for her to shake hands, the Nevada station reported.

In Iowa a week ago, she had a tough response for the Republicans who have criticized her husband.

"Stop it. This is hard. You want to try it? Get in the ring," she told an Iowa radio station. "This is hard. It's an important thing that we're doing right now."

Video: <http://www.ktvn.com/story/19636279/ann-romney-campaigns-for-husband-in-reno>.



20120928-04

12:32

SteveB

"The Three Moments That Wrecked the Romney Campaign and their Common Thread: Conservatism"

"The Three Moments That Wrecked the Romney Campaign and their Common Thread: Conservatism" by Bill Scher, NationofChange

Sept. 28, 2012, (<http://www.nationofchange.org/three-moments-wrecked-romney-campaign-and-their-common-thread-conservatism-1348840244>)

Mitt Romney arguably lost Ohio on November 18, 2008, when he penned an oped titled "Let Detroit Go Bankrupt." Today, 64% of Ohio voters call President Obama's restructuring of the auto industry "mostly good."

Mitt Romney arguably lost Florida, with its heavy concentration of older voters, when he picked as his vice-presidential nominee Paul Ryan, the face of the conservative plan to end Medicare as we know it.

The CBS/New York Times/Quinnipiac poll now has Obama leading Romney by 9 points in Florida, up from a 3 point lead in late August.

In August, Romney was ahead among Florida voters 65 and older by 13 points. Now, Obama is ahead among voters 55 and older (don't ask me why Quinnipiac didn't publish the same age breakdowns) by 8 points. This tracks with what the national Reuters poll found. Romney used to have a 20 point lead with voters 60 and over, now it's less than four.

And Romney arguably lost every possible remaining undecided voter when the "47%" video was uncovered on Sept. 18. What polling we have seen since then suggests Romney, already losing, is now cratering. Quinnipiac also found record double digit leads for Obama in Ohio and Pennsylvania. The Gallup tracking poll, long more favorable to Romney than most, has moved five points in Obama's direction since the video. And the ABC/Washington Post poll found 61% of voters disapprove of how Romney has handled his campaign, with 54% disagreeing with his "47%" comments.

**The common thread in all of these moments is they were raw expressions of modern conservatism. Government should not aggressively save an industry in dire trouble. Government should not guarantee health care for retirees. Government should not help those working to help themselves but still struggle.**

**The albatross around Romney's neck is not so much his wealth or his social skills. It is modern conservatism that has sunk his campaign,** and would have sunk any other this year.

The public remembers that conservatism is what wrecked in the economy 2008. And until conservatives make amends for that, they have little hope of earning a majority.

Maybe not even 47%.

20120928-14

19:01

SteveB

"Mitt's Campaign-Killing Snobbery"

"Mitt's Campaign-Killing Snobbery" by Sally Kohn, Salon

Sept. 28, 2012, ([http://www.salon.com/2012/09/28/mitt\\_romney\\_adrift/](http://www.salon.com/2012/09/28/mitt_romney_adrift/))

(If you need help docking your large boat, Romney's your man. That's become a problem for voters.)

At a recent fundraiser, Bill Marriott, chairman of the international hotel conglomerate, introduced Republican presidential candidate Mitt Romney by noting that they both have summer houses on Lake Winnepesaukee in New Hampshire. Marriott told a story of taking his boat into town with his grandkids to get ice cream:

And we got into the docks and they were all full and I looked around, there was no place to park, so we stopped at the end of a dock. They all jumped off and ran up the dock. And I realized there was nobody in the boat to help me dock the boat, handle the ropes, do anything – they just left me out there at sea. So I finally found a place to park after about 20 minutes, and I pulled in, I said, 'Who's going to grab the rope?' And I looked up and there was Mitt Romney. So he pulled me in, he tied up the boat for me. He rescued me just as he's going to rescue this great country.



Republican presidential candidate, former Massachusetts Gov. Mitt Romney, takes his family for a boat ride on Lake Winnepesaukee, July 14, 2012, in Wolfeboro, NH. (AP Photo/Evan Vucci)

No doubt all of the big donors in the room who have boats so big it takes more than one person to dock them were nodding along and thinking, "Yeah, Mitt Romney understands us rich people and is here to help." Of course, for the 99 percent of other voters, that is precisely the problem.

The issue is not that Romney is wealthy. There have been many successful, wealthy candidates in American history — Kennedy, both Roosevelts, obviously plenty of members of Congress. In fact, it's worth noting that President Obama's net worth far exceeds that of the average American family.

The issue is that Romney seems out of touch. He just does not seem relatable and sympathetic with ordinary people and their struggles. It is this — and not his bland personality, his bad campaign management — that is sinking Romney's candidacy.

In her RNC speech, Ann Romney tried to simultaneously make her husband appear more human and more Everyman by talking about their run-down first apartment where "our dining room table was a fold-down ironing board." But the fact that both Ann and Mitt came from extremely wealthy families and Mitt was studying at Harvard Law and Business schools at the time, paid for entirely by his father, makes this colorful, cherry-picked detail look desperate — not as in desperately poor once upon a time, but desperate for trying to pretend he ever really knew financial hardship.

An illustrative lesson comes courtesy of the Bush family. In 1992, George H.W. Bush was tripped up in his reelection bid when he couldn't name the price of a gallon of milk during a debate. Fast-forward to 2004, and George W. Bush — who had arguably all if not more of the baggage of growing up rich and privileged — won a much-touted poll question of which candidate voters would rather have a beer with. The younger Bush wasn't any less wealthy than his father, he was simply more likable and relatable.

When Mitt Romney, trying to make nice with an audience of autoworkers, says that his wife has "a couple of Cadillacs," that isn't just a gaffe. It's a revealing window into the mind and heart of a candidate who somehow doesn't understand how incredibly different his life is from that of ordinary Americans and doesn't see any need to

respectfully and reflectively act accordingly. Again, the problem isn't that Romney is rich. The problem is that Romney is elitist.

Remember when Romney said to a group of out-of-work voters, "I'm also unemployed"? When he said you should "never get involved in politics if you have to win an election to pay a mortgage"? When he offered to bet Rick Perry \$10,000? And, of course, his lofty dismissal of 47 percent of Americans as irresponsible, dependent victims? He's not just a bumbling guy who's bad at campaigning. Mitt Romney is a snob.

20120928-15

19:53

SteveB

Business Management 101 (to Republicans) & "Five Signs Mitt Romney's Campaign Is Crumbling"

Let me ask you just one quick question...

If the argument is that Romney would make a better President because of his business management experience at Bain, how do you explain the following business management tidbit?

**The Obama campaign has \$33 million more on hand than Romney's campaign and they also appear to be spending it more intelligently. Last month both campaigns spent over four million dollars on salaries but the president employed *twice as many staffers*.** If the whiff of desperation gets much worse, it will be hard for Romney to raise more funds just as the ability to donate by text opens a motherlode for the Obama campaign. [see source, below]

It sounds as if the President is the better manager, in the world of reality. I guess just about everything else in the two campaigns and polls also proves that. Plus, he's simultaneously managing the most exceptional country in the world and doing a pretty damned good job of it (see recent UN speech).

Romney the manager? LOL!

Goin' down HARD, very soon! Poor GOP!

"Five Signs Mitt Romney's Campaign Is Crumbling" by *The National Memo*

Sept. 28, 2012, (<http://www.nationalmemo.com/five-signs-mitt-romneys-campaign-is-crumbling/?25851#25851>)

### 1. Romney's Advantage On Economic Issues Is Gone

The most powerful lingering effect of President Bill Clinton's highly praised speech at the Democratic National Convention was the way it wrested the economic advantage in this race from Mitt Romney. After the president's campaign laid a foundation by questioning Romney's career at Bain and record in Massachusetts, Clinton was able to connect the GOP nominee to the failed "policies that got us into this mess." *Washington Post's* Greg Sargent notes, "Eight recent national polls, and several polls in the key swing states, show that Obama has now pulled into a tie with Romney on handling the economy."

### 2. Even Conservatives Don't Buy Romney's Argument

On Fox News Sunday, right-wing pundit Bill Kristol said, "**Bush was president during the financial meltdown, the Obama team has turned that around pretty well.**" When one of your Fox friends shoots down what has been your rationale for election for months, you're in trouble.

### 3. Making Up The Numbers

At this point, conservatives' only hope is that the polls are wrong. One Republican even set up a site to "unskew" polls to weight them all with the highly suspect party weighting Rasmussen Reports uses. Then you'll find a Romney landslide about to happen. But even Scott Rasmussen says that logic doesn't work: "You cannot compare partisan

weighting from one polling firm to another." President Ronald Reagan said, "If you're explaining, you're losing." For this case, substitute "unskewing" for "explaining."

#### 4. Cash Burn

**The Obama campaign has \$33 million more on hand than Romney's campaign and they also appear to be spending it more intelligently. Last month both campaigns spent over four million dollars on salaries but the president employed twice as many staffers. If the whiff of desperation gets much worse, it will be hard for Romney to raise more funds just as the ability to donate by text opens a motherlode for the Obama campaign.**

#### 5. Inventing Gaffes, Ignoring Policies

As former Bush speechwriter David Frum asked, "How do you message: I'm doing away with Medicaid over the next 10 yrs, Medicare after that, to finance a cut in the top rate of tax to 28 percent?" The answer is, you can't. Mitt Romney's hope was to appease his base with policy, impress swing voters with his competence and tear apart the president for his failures. His competence has become questionable and his failure narrative replaced by Bill Clinton's retelling of the past four years. All he can do is pull the president out of context and hope something sticks. Fortunately for Romney, his base will indulge in anything that makes the president look bad. But the outrage doesn't seem to interest anyone else.

<a href="#">20120928-16</a>	20:18	SteveB	"Fox's Laughable Case for Romney"
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Oops #9...more great media comedy!

"Fox's Laughable Case for Romney" by Howell Raines, CNN

Sept. 28, 2012, ([http://us.cnn.com/2012/09/28/opinion/raines-fox-romney/index.html?hpt=po\\_c1](http://us.cnn.com/2012/09/28/opinion/raines-fox-romney/index.html?hpt=po_c1))

(Fox's Bill O'Reilly brings on guests who deliver an alternate reality about Mitt Romney's weakened campaign, Howell Raines says.)

Who says the media aren't interested in good news? Fox News has been broadcasting lots of it for Mitt Romney this week. Never have so many gray clouds had silver linings as those hovering over the hapless Republican candidate and his deflating campaign.

I bring you this report after having ventured into Bill O'Reilly's "No-Spin Zone," and believe me, his initial shout-out urging viewers to exercise "caution" before watching is fully, if unintentionally, appropriate. Apparently in Fox World, "no-spin" means "I am now going to share my news-based fantasies."

The Wednesday broadcast featured Dick Morris, Karl Rove and Dennis Miller, an a-cappella chorus humming O'Reilly's favorite tunes: that the mainstream media is rooting for Obama; that the polls consistently misrepresent a race that is still a dead heat; that Romney will re-emerge from this autumnal swoon by winning the October 3 debate through his superior if often-invisible oratorical skills; that Romney is in decline simply because voters don't yet understand the necessity of top-end tax cuts, the sanctity of corporate profits and the horror of social welfare spending run amok.

Across its programs, the Fox News mantra is "there's still plenty of time." That's a truism, but chanting the obvious is not among the standard definitions of journalism. Institutionally, Fox is in denial about the state of the campaign. Romney is looking very weak very early. The attempt to avoid reporting this state of play in a "fair and balanced" way is producing comical results.

Stylistically, the O'Reilly quartet may be on to something new. We've had mainstream journalism, alternative journalism, conservative journalism. This appears to be vaudeville journalism. Wednesday, the verisimilitude of the performance was maintained by the illusion that of the four, only Miller is a stand-up comic.

Rove's role is nuttily professorial. He has adopted one of those erasable white slates popularized by the late Tim Russert. On it he scribbles integers with plus or minus signs. These, he alleges, are the amounts being added to President Barack Obama and/or subtracted from Romney by such daredevil organizations as *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, CBS, NBC, CNN, Gallup and the co-opted poll-averagers at the website RealClearPolitics. Bottom line: This vast conspiracy is downgrading Romney three to nine points by using screens that overstate the votes of blacks, Latinos, Asians, women and the young.

Morris, who is beginning to bear a waxen resemblance to Orson Welles, explained, I think, that pollsters cheat by using false baseline figures from previous elections. Morris didn't have time to explicate fully how every news organization except Fox has signed up to help Obama by disseminating these cooked figures. Even so, O'Reilly thanked Morris for explaining polling mysteries he said he had not previously understood.

The effect was somewhat spoiled by an unscripted guest from reality, Larry Sabato, the scholarly political scientist from the University of Virginia, who immediately dismissed Morris' rant as "grassy-knoll" statistics. He added that the poll averages on RealClearPolitics had things about right. Obama was ahead by about four points nationally. Of the big-three swing states, Sabato said, perhaps in order not to appear rude to his host, only Florida is still close.

The presence of Miller is apparently driven by commercial considerations. He and O'Reilly now have a lecture-circuit act that is selling out in such venues as Houston and Las Vegas. The closest I've heard Miller come to elegant public-policy analysis was to call Obama a "crap president" earlier this week. As a nod to factuality, O'Reilly does call Miller a "satirist" and, less plausibly, an NFL expert, due to his badly reviewed stint on Monday Night Football. In any event, it's hard to imagine anyone with a master's in public policy from Harvard, which O'Reilly has, consulting Miller on an important national election -- unless there's money in it.

Which brings us to the interesting case of O'Reilly himself. O'Reilly is no dummy, and he did work as a broadcast news professional before veering into infotainment with "Inside Edition" and the Fox gig. For all his pugnacity, these days O'Reilly has the look of a man doing beautiful pirouettes on increasingly thin ice. He's clearly angling to survive a Romney train wreck with some credible deniability by leaving the delusional commentary to Rove et al. and hinting at his suppressed misgivings about Romney's chances.

He's not a man easily knocked off balance by contrary evidence. Thursday he opened with Fox's own poll, which presumably lacked the evils defined by Rove and Morris. It showed Obama's favorability up by 51% to Romney's 48%. It was, from a Foxian point of view, a nicer number than Obama's five point head-to-head lead, 48% to 43%.

Cannily, he drops in terms such as "in fairness to Obama," praises the president's campaigning skills and takes note of criticism of Romney by other conservatives. He hangs his hat on the observation that October 3 is Romney's last chance to get back in the race. This leaves him room to turn around if the polls -- we're talking the real ones here -- don't.

O'Reilly's newest hedge, unveiled with Fox's bleak new poll, is that the "likability" factor gives Obama an advantage with "uninformed, casual voters."

I think there's a secret behind O'Reilly's trademark smirk. Were it in his interest to say what's on his mind about the candidates' performance to date, he'd almost certainly admit that Obama has come on like a superstar candidate of the Reagan ilk, and so far Romney is one of the biggest duds in post-World War II presidential elections.

Right now, Fox News' general excuse for Romney is that he's not getting his "message" across. I'll tune in from time to time to see when the news from the real world arrives in the Fox studios. The message of Romney's tooth-and-fang financial-market capitalism is driving down the polls, and the messenger is coming across as an unlikable empty suit, even when he ditches his tie and jacket.

At a certain point, campaigns in early decline begin to reek of impending defeat. I can't wait to see how they spin that in the no-spin zone. Meanwhile, we can contemplate the dilemma of another O'Reilly regular, the Loneliest in the Public Opinion Trade, aka pollster Scott Rasmussen. He's telling O'Reilly the race is tied within the margin of error around 46% or 47%.

20120929-01 07:06 MarthaH "Poll: Who Would Thrive Depends on Who Wins in 2012"

What we knew already!

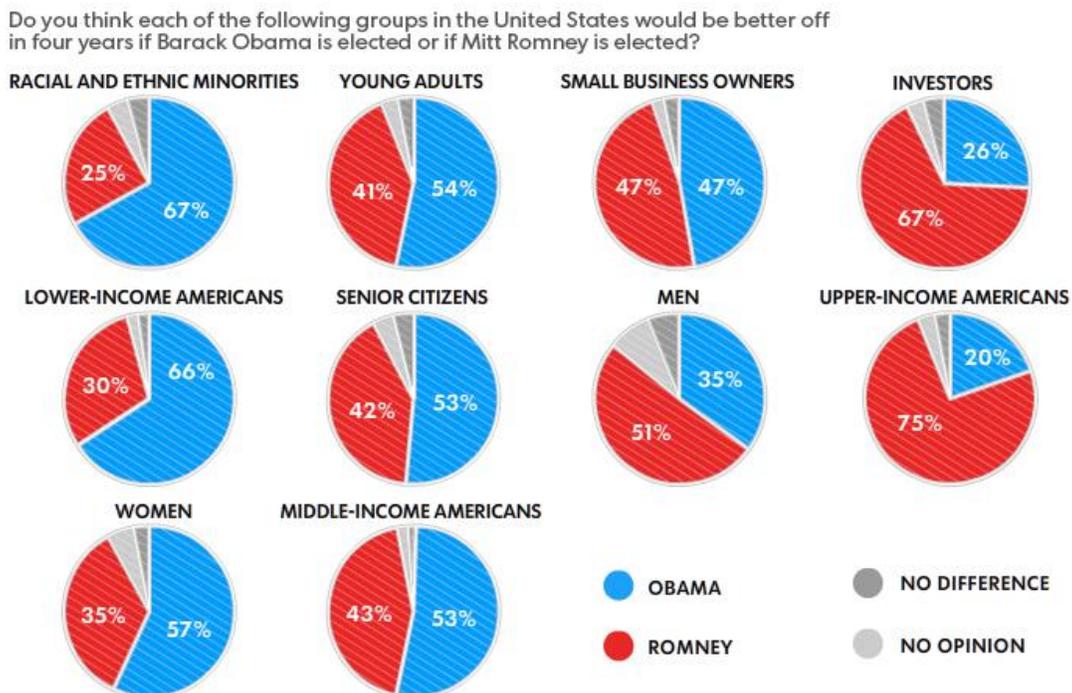
"Poll: Who Would Thrive Depends on Who Wins in 2012" by Susan Page, *USA Today*

Sept. 29, 2012, (<http://www.usatoday.com/story/news/politics/2012/09/29/poll-obama-romney-gallup/1601125/>)

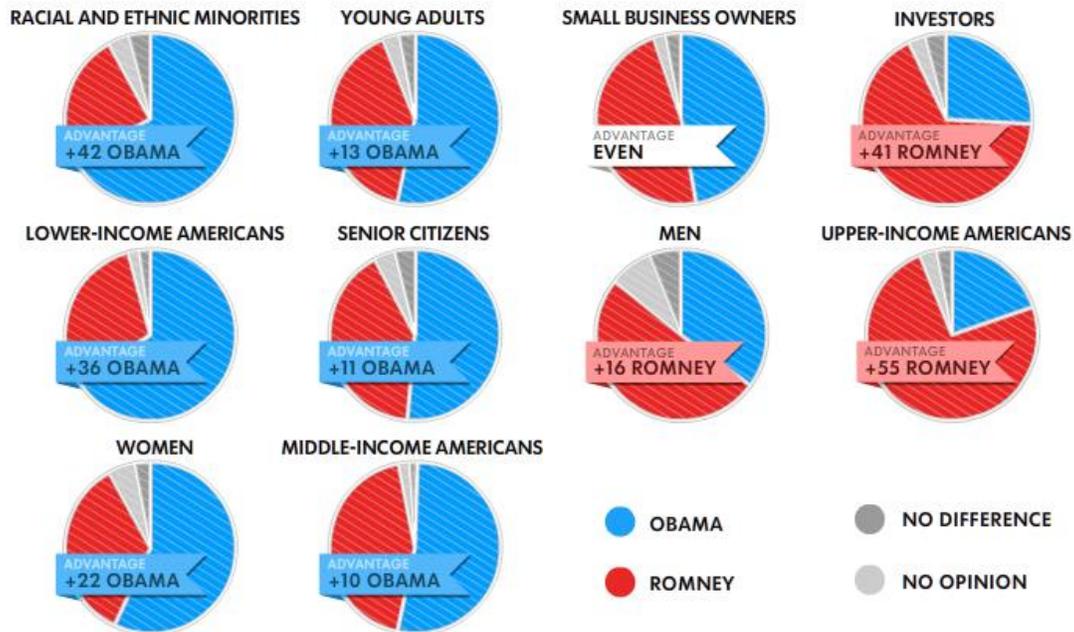
Republican presidential candidate Mitt Romney is using the "are you better off?" argument -- first used by Ronald Reagan against Jimmy Carter in 1980 -- in his current race against President Obama. Voters were asked do you think each of the following groups in the United States would be better off in four years if Barack Obama is elected or if Mitt Romney is elected?

Who would be better off over the next four years under a President Obama or a President Romney? Clear perceptions of winners and losers map the political landscape for the campaign's final weeks.

In a new *USA Today*/Gallup Poll, Americans express definite perceptions about what groups would thrive under which administration, providing a portrait of how each contender has been defined in the public's view. That question and others in the survey map the political landscape as the campaign heads into its final five weeks.



Do you think each of the following groups in the United States would be better off in four years if Barack Obama is elected or if Mitt Romney is elected?



It is an electorate that is less engaged, less enthusiastic and less favorably inclined toward the candidates than at this point in recent presidential campaigns. It is also an electorate that confidently predicts the groups that will be winners and losers, depending on who prevails on Nov. 6.

The rich? By an overwhelming 55 percentage points, those surveyed say upper-income Americans would fare better if Republican challenger Mitt Romney wins.

The poor? By 36 points, they say low-income people would do better under Barack Obama.

And by 10 points, middle-income Americans are seen as doing better over the next four years if Obama wins a second term. That's important politically, since most Americans identify themselves as middle class. One of Romney's most critical tasks -- including at the candidates' first debate Wednesday in Denver -- is to persuade more middle-class voters that electing him would be good for them.

There is also a gender chasm. By double digits, Americans say women would be better off under an Obama presidency; men would be better off under a Romney presidency. Given that, it's hardly surprising that female voters nationwide and in some crucial swing states have boosted Obama while male voters are inclined to support Romney.

With one group, though, there seems to be a disconnect. Those 65 and older are the age group that most strongly backs Romney. But by 11 points, Americans say seniors would fare better over the next four years if Obama prevails.

In contrast, voters under 30 are Obama's best age group. By 13 points, Americans say young people will do better if the president wins a second term.

The decisive judgments on which groups would be winners in an Obama or Romney presidency are a sign of how sharply defined the two candidates have become. Investors would do better under Romney, those surveyed say by an overwhelming 41 points. Racial and ethnic minorities would do better under Obama, they say by an equally huge 42 points.

Only one group fell right in the middle: Small-business owners. By 47%-47%, those surveyed divided over whether they would do better under Obama or Romney. For the other nine groups named, Americans by double digits and well outside the survey's margin of error say they would fare better under one or the other.

The poll of 1,446 adults, taken Monday through Thursday, has a margin of error of +/- 3 percentage points.

Republicans have opened a big enthusiasm gap: 64% say they are more enthusiastic than usual about voting, compared to 48% of Democrats. In general, though, the results show an electorate that is less excited and less engaged than in recent presidential elections.

Democrats are less enthusiastic about voting than in 2008, although Republicans are a bit more enthusiastic. Fewer Democrats and Republicans say they have given a lot of thought to the election than they did in the falls of 2008 and 2004.

Romney's favorable rating is 47%, lower than that of any presidential candidate at this point in the past 20 years. Obama's favorable rating is better, at 55%, but still lower than that of six of the past 10 major-party nominees.

Only 13% say both Obama and Romney would be a good president. Four years ago, 25% felt that way about Obama and 2008 rival John McCain.

<a href="#">20120929-02</a>	07:27	SteveB	"Why Mitt Romney Is the Perfect GOP Candidate"
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The perfect candidate...

"Why Mitt Romney Is the Perfect GOP Candidate" by Andrew Leonard, Salon

Sept. 28, 2012, ([http://www.salon.com/2012/09/28/why\\_mitt\\_romney\\_is\\_the\\_perfect\\_gop\\_candidate/](http://www.salon.com/2012/09/28/why_mitt_romney_is_the_perfect_gop_candidate/))

(Mitt Romney is the perfect evolutionary adaptation to a world in which workers get screwed.)

Ever since Mitt Romney began running for president pundits have marveled and conservatives have moaned at the contradiction embodied by the former governor of Massachusetts. A moderate Republican who passed universal healthcare and tried to run to the left of Ted Kennedy on abortion sought — and won! — the nomination of a party that had been moving hard right for decades. The result of the primary campaign of 2012 posed a marvelous mystery. How could such a bad mismatch for the Republican base successfully become their standard bearer?

Romney's competition — a cavalcade of loons and crazies the likes of which hadn't been gathered together since the movie "Freaks" — offers a partial explanation. Romney got lucky.

But there's another way to view his candidacy — a frame in which Romney is the perfect representative of what 30 years of Republican ascendance in American politics have wrought. The truth is, there is no mismatch. Conservative economic policies — union busting, deregulation, tax cuts that favor the rich — have delivered an era of income inequality unprecedented in American history. That's Mitt Romney's America. No politician currently operating in America better encapsulates the divergence of class outcomes resulting from those policies. If he were to somehow get elected, his victory would be the period at the end of the Reagan revolution sentence. Mission accomplished, indeed.

The data are clear. Ever since 1980, working men and women in the United States have been getting screwed. Or, to put it in the more restrained language of a new paper released this week by the Federal Reserve Bank of Cleveland, **"Labor income has been declining as a share of total income earned in the United States for the past three decades."**

After 1980 ... average real income grew by 0.05 percent only for the bottom 20 percent of households, while it grew by 1.24 percent for the top 20 percent and by 1.67 percent for the top 5 percent. The share of income earned by the top-income households rose significantly after 1980, while the share earned by the bottom-income households declined.

Let's break that down a little further:

Household income comes in two types: labor income, which includes wages, salaries, and other work-related compensation (such as pension and insurance benefits and incentive-based compensation), and capital income, which includes interest, dividends, and other realized investment returns (such as capital gains). During the last three decades, labor's share of total income has declined in favor of capital income.

Whom do we know who fits into that capital income box? Seems to me that just the other day I was scanning through a really long tax return — oh yeah!

Mitt Romney's tax return for 2011 reported \$13.7 million of income. Virtually every cent falls under the category "capital income." Capital gains: \$6.8 million. Taxable interest: \$3 million. Dividends: \$3.7 million. Wage income: Zero.

Could it be any more clear? Mitt Romney is the living incarnation of the flip side of labor's declining share of income. What working men and women lost, he gained.

And he's the Republican presidential candidate for 2012.

Seriously, that's pretty epic! Mitt Romney is the truth of Republican economics made manifest, the word of trickle-down gospel become flesh. More so than any of his GOP presidential predecessors, Romney exemplifies the changes of the last 30 years. Forget about the flip-flops on abortion, gay rights, healthcare, immigration — you name it. In terms of the practical consequences of the application of Republican economic ideology, Mitt Romney is the perfect Republican candidate.

Republicans increasingly don't believe in evolution, but if we review the class background and job resumes of the recent Republican presidents leading up to Romney, it's hard to avoid the sense that natural selection is at work. In the harsh environment bequeathed to us by Reagan's heirs, only the plutocratic parasite can survive.

The story begins with Ronald Reagan. Don't forget: He was a real working man, an actor who got involved in organized labor as the president of the Screen Actor's Guild (given current standards of rhetoric, you could even call him a one-time union thug!).

Then came George H.W. Bush. Sure, he was the son of a senator and a Connecticut blueblood, which made him an awkward graft onto the Reagan family tree. But he was also a successful oilman. He played an undeniably constructive role in the economy, extracting energy from the ground to fuel the industrial machine. A boss, not a worker, but clearly part of the means of production.

Next up, George W. Bush, an unsuccessful oilman. But hey, he went to business school — he was our first "MBA president." We can now see mutations beginning to bear evolutionary fruit. Pushing numbers around a spreadsheet has now become more advantageous than digging stuff out of the ground or sweating for an honest wage on a Hollywood sound stage.

Finally, we come to Mitt Romney — the private equity wheeler-dealer, a practitioner of a business model that depends on using borrowed money to purchase struggling firms, after which the new owners extract as much profit as possible in the short term before moving on. A man far, far richer than any of his predecessors, a man, for crying out loud, whose wife owns a horse whose yearly upkeep costs more than the average American earns in a year.

The fossil record cannot be denied. The evolutionary class war is over. Mitt Romney won.

It's hard to think of anyone who could have benefited more from the changes of the last 30 years than Mitt Romney. The tax cuts pushed through by Reagan and Bush disproportionately reward him. The tsunami of union-busting touched off by Reagan's breaking of the air traffic controller union signaled the beginning of an era in which workers would be powerless to resist the savage cost-cutting strategies of the Bain Capitals of the world. Larger trends — globalization, deregulation, technological progress — all served to undermine the power of the worker at the expense of the boss. As median incomes have stagnated or fallen, CEO compensation skyrocketed.

## **A world of income inequality is Mitt Romney's world. He owns it — the rest of us just live in it.**

20120929-03 07:57 Pam "Transaction Man"

Another article in this week's *New Yorker* shed some light on the life and times of Mr. Mitt. The magazine is generally liberal--well, quite liberal--but I thought this article was "fair and balanced." The focus was on Mitt's family background, religion, education, and business experience and philosophy. It was extremely revelatory. Mitt worshiped his father, and the family held a grudge against Nelson Rockefeller, who promised to support George for president, then entered the race himself. George et al. felt betrayed. The whole Mormon thing is, Work, Succeed, Live for the Church, Be Responsible, Raise a Family, Succeed, Get a lot of Education, and Succeed. Church members ARE the church; there is no professional clergy, which means members are trained for positions of leadership from age three on. They're a tight bunch. Except for the crazy parts, it's not a bad way of life. Mitt is and always has been extremely confident of his abilities to solve problems, and he's proven himself to be good at doing just that. Up till now, he hasn't been particularly ideological--beyond a Republican privileging of business and his religion--but has been very pragmatic, collecting data, weighing options, deciding on the best one, implementing it, and seeing it through to completion. His MA health care plan is a case in point. I don't find any of this particularly disturbing. What is disturbing is Mitt's utter isolation when it comes to the working stiff who is just trying to get by. Little rich kid, famous father, Stanford, missionary work in France (of all places), BYU, early marriage and big family, Harvard Law (JD, MBA), and his first job was with a top firm in the financial sector. The man is a whiz in the board room, but we've seen what he's like in the "real" world.

I actually found this article somewhat reassuring. I'm pretty sure Mitt has had to mouth ideas he doesn't particularly believe in in order to win hearts and minds. He'll do whatever it takes to get the job done, and if that's what he has to do, then by golly he'll do it. He's a pragmatist through and through. Not stark, raving mad, in other words. But he is so wedded to the corporate mentality he doesn't seem to see anything else. His father was all about business too, but to George politics was the ultimate calling. Mitt's running for president is something that would have made the old man proud. It's what a REAL man, a real Mormon, would do. George was pragmatic about losing the presidency and didn't seem to lose any sleep over it. I suspect Mitt will be the same. He's done what he could with what he had, tried his best, and if the people want something else, so be it. The real tragedy is his hijacking by the far right that has made him into a caricature, looking like a fool. "A man's got to know his limits."

When I compare Mitt to Obama, I see two good men, but their life experiences and backgrounds have taken them in entirely different directions. Romney may well have good ideas about the economy, but he would be ruthless in implementing them. And he ignores the fact that everyone doesn't want to start a small business. That's what he sees as the path to success, but for the vast majority of the un- and under-employed that is simply not a viable solution. He believes dealing with recalcitrant foreign leaders means strong-arming them into a deal they can't refuse. That may work with the board of Bain, but it ain't gonna cut it with Putin and Amadinejad (sp?). Obama has a genuinely global perspective, and we desperately need that at this point. He, too, is a pragmatist, but his pragmatism is in relation to politics. He sees what needs to be done, and he has the smarts to know what is possible. Romney is a great deal maker, and so long as he has a neat office and a good secretary, he can get the job done. I can't see him mixing it up with Angela Merkel or fixing Greece. He'll cut the U.S. loose, just like he did the board at Bain (there are two Bains; I'm talking about the first one), and economically that might not be bad (though I don't see how it could be good), but the rest of the world would hate us for it. Obama, on the other hand, is a better schmoozer, just as smart if not smarter, just as confident, and a whole lot more compassionate. I do think the Tea Party is dangerous, as are the politicians who pander to it, and their insinuation into the heart of the Republican party is disturbing to say the least. Romney isn't part of that, however. That part is reassuring. His narrow focus on business is not encouraging, as there is so much out there that he simply doesn't see. It's hard for a rich person, who's been rich all his life, to even comprehend what not being able to afford shampoo is like. Obama knows.

"Transaction Man" by Nicholas Lemann, *The New Yorker*

Oct. 1, 2012, ([http://www.newyorker.com/reporting/2012/10/01/121001fa\\_fact\\_lemann](http://www.newyorker.com/reporting/2012/10/01/121001fa_fact_lemann))

(Mormonism, private equity, and the making of a candidate.)

ABSTRACT: A REPORTER AT LARGE about Mitt Romney, the Republican candidate for President, and how his political career has been shaped by his background in the Mormon faith and the worlds of consulting and private equity. Author explores Romney's background through historical research, and by talking at length with Romney's friends and colleagues, as well as with the candidate himself. If elected, Romney, scion of an old, distinguished Mormon family (his ancestors had a direct connection to Joseph Smith and Brigham Young), would arguably be the most actively religious President in American history; he's been deeply influenced by the Mormon values of personal discipline and business-centric practicality. His approach to problem-solving, meanwhile, has developed over the course of a long career as a consultant, at Bain & Company, and in private equity, at Bain Capital; he thinks of himself as a rescuer, someone who can apply data-driven analyses to otherwise intractable problems and emerge with workable solutions. Romney, in short, presents an unusual combination: personally, he is driven by old-fashioned values, while professionally he is thoroughly modern, a prime mover in the finance-driven, post-corporate, essentially transactional economy that has come to define America in the early twenty-first century. Though Romney is direct, pleasant, and engaged in small groups, his campaign has been hindered by his inability to open up in front of crowds.

[Continue reading at \*The New Yorker\*...](#)

<a href="#">20120929-04</a>	08:04	SteveB	"The Most Damning Line in the Secret Romney Video"
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"The Most Damning Line in the Secret Romney Video" by David Corn, MotherJones

Sept. 24, 2012, (<http://www.motherjones.com/moj/2012/09/most-damning-line-secret-romney-video>)

In the week since I made public the secret video of Mitt Romney at a private Boca Raton fundraiser denigrating almost half of America as moochers and victims, I've been repeatedly asked what I consider the most damaging—or damning—portion of Romney's remarks. I've noted that the great thing about this story is that people can watch the video for themselves—7 million people went to this site or YouTube in the first days of the video's release and did that—and reach their own conclusions.

Yet one sentence did stand out to me. When Romney was in mid-rant about the 47 percent—simplistically and erroneously conflating three subsets of Americans: those who voted for Barack Obama, those who receive some form of government assistance, and those who pay no federal income taxes—he said:

**I'll never convince them that they should take personal responsibility and care for their lives.**

Here was Romney sharing his view that Americans who don't make enough money to pay income taxes and his fellow citizens who rely on Medicare, Medicaid, food stamps, or other government programs are lesser people than he and the millionaires before him. **These people, Romney was saying, are not adults; they do not, and will not, fend for themselves or do what they must to feed, clothe, shelter, educate, and care for themselves and their family members. It was an arrogant insult spoken with true detachment.** This was 100-percent 1-percent.

My view of this one line was reinforced this morning. I walked into a store to buy some cleaning products. The 40-something woman at the counter rang up the purchases and kept looking at me. Once I had paid, she said in a low voice, "I really don't want to bother you, but..."

Go ahead, I said.

**But I know who you are, and I just want to say that Mitt Romney doesn't know what he's talking about. Not at all. I am college-educated, but look where I'm working now. I can't find a better job now. And, and....**

She paused and lowered her voice more:

**I'm on food stamps. I didn't have a choice. I'm making about \$12,000 a year now. And I need them. I work hard. And I'm looking for other work. But just because I'm on food stamps doesn't mean I'm not taking care of myself. Doesn't he know that? Doesn't he get it?**

Apparently not. Many people on food stamps, Medicaid, and the like do strive to provide for themselves and their families. The working poor...work. They may even park cars at fancy fundraisers for minimum wage. Romney all-too-glibly characterized anyone receiving any public assistance as a parasitic freeloader, and he revealed an us-versus-them attitude that was tremendously ungracious, mean-spirited, and predicated on ignorance of the real world.

**"Thank you, thank you," the woman said. "You showed us what he really thinks of us, what he thinks of me."**

Mitt Romney built that.

20120930-08	23:01	SteveB	"Mitt Romney's Real Agenda"
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"Mitt Romney's Real Agenda" by Tim Dickinson, *Rolling Stone*

Sept. 28, 2012, (<http://www.rollingstone.com/politics/news/mitt-romneys-real-agenda-20120928>)

(If you want to understand Romney's game plan, just look at what Republicans have been doing in Congress.)

It was tempting to dismiss Mitt Romney's hard-right turn during the GOP primaries as calculated pandering. In the general election – as one of his top advisers famously suggested – Romney would simply shake the old Etch A Sketch and recast himself as the centrist who governed Massachusetts. But with the selection of vice-presidential nominee Paul Ryan, the shape-shifting Romney has locked into focus – cementing himself as the frontman for the far-right partisans responsible for Washington's gridlock.

There is no longer any ambiguity about the path that Romney would pursue as president, because it's the same trajectory charted by Ryan, the architect of the House GOP's reactionary agenda since the party's takeover in 2010. "Picking Ryan as vice president outlines the future of the next four or eight years of a Romney administration," GOP power broker Grover Norquist exulted in August. "Ryan has outlined a plan that has support in the Republican House and Senate. You have a real sense of where Romney's going." In fact, Norquist told party activists back in February, the true direction of the GOP is being mapped out by congressional hardliners. All the Republicans need to realize their vision, he said, is a president "with enough working digits to handle a pen."

The GOP legislation awaiting Romney's signature isn't simply a return to the era of George W. Bush. From abortion rights and gun laws to tax giveaways and energy policy, it's far worse. Measures that have already sailed through the Republican House would roll back clean-air protections, gut both Medicare and Medicaid, lavish trillions in tax cuts on billionaires while raising taxes on the poor, and slash everything from college aid to veteran benefits. In fact, the tenets of Ryan Republicanism are so extreme that they even offend the pioneers of trickle-down economics. "Ryan takes out the ax and goes after programs for the poor – which is the last thing you ought to cut," says David Stockman, who served as Ronald Reagan's budget director. "It's ideology run amok."

And Romney has now adopted every letter of the Ryan agenda. Take it from Ed Gillespie, senior adviser to the campaign: "If the Ryan budget had come to his desk as president," Gillespie said of Romney, "he would have signed it, of course."

A look at the bills that Republicans have passed since they took control of the House in 2010 offers a clear blueprint of the agenda that a Romney administration would be primed to establish:

FEWER JOBS

Republicans in Congress have repeatedly put ideology before creating jobs. For more than a year, they've refused to put President Obama's jobs bill up for a vote, even though projections show it would create nearly 2 million jobs without adding a penny to the deficit. The reason? The \$447 billion bill would be entirely paid for through a surtax on millionaires.

In addition, the Republicans' signature initiative last year – the debt-ceiling standoff – was a jobs-killer, applying the brakes to the economic recovery. From February through April 2011, the economy had been adding 200,000 jobs a month. But during the uncertainty created by the congressional impasse, job creation was cut in half for every month the standoff-continued. And according to the Economic Policy Institute, the immediate spending cuts required by the debt-ceiling compromise are likely to shrink the economy by \$43 billion this year, killing nearly 323,000 jobs.

What Ryan markets as his "Path to Prosperity" would make things even worse: The draconian cuts in his latest budget, according to the EPI, would put an additional drag on the economy, destroying another 4.1 million jobs by 2014.

### GOD, GUNS AND GAYS

The retrograde social agenda laid out in recent GOP legislation represents a full-scale assault on fundamental American rights. Last year, the House passed a bill that would broadly prohibit women from purchasing insurance plans that cover abortion. The so-called Protect Life Act would also allow hospitals to refuse a dying woman an abortion that would save her life. Ryan himself co-sponsored legislation that would have made it impossible for impoverished victims of rape and incest to receive abortions unless their assault met a narrow definition of "forcible rape." Under the bill's language, for instance, federal abortion coverage would be denied to a 12-year-old girl impregnated by a 40-year-old man, unless she could prove she fought back.

When they weren't trying to force women to birth babies for rapists, the GOP House was voting to make it easier for would-be criminals to carry concealed firearms. In the first major gun legislation passed after their colleague Gabrielle Giffords was shot in the head, the House sided with her attempted murderer, passing an NRA-backed measure that would have undercut state limits on concealed-carry permits. Under the legislation, authorities in a state that prohibits drunk people from carrying a hidden weapon, for instance, would be barred from arresting an armed inebriate if he had a permit from another state without such a restriction. The bill, said Dennis Henigan of the Brady Campaign to Prevent Gun Violence, would "make it easier for the Jared Loughners of the world to pack heat on our streets and in our communities."

The GOP's love of guns is rivaled only by its contempt for gay Americans – even those who take up arms in defense of their country. Unable to block the repeal of "Don't Ask, Don't Tell," Republicans in the House approved riders in the Defense appropriations bill to undermine the rights of gays in the armed forces. An amendment introduced by Rep. Todd Akin – Ryan's co-sponsor on "forcible rape" – sought to prohibit military facilities from being used to hold gay weddings, and to bar military chaplains from presiding over such ceremonies. Another House rider banned the military from offering medical, pension and death benefits to the spouses of gay soldiers.

### DRILL AND POLLUTE

In thrall to dirty-energy interests, House Republicans have held more than 300 votes to hamstring the EPA, roll back environmental protections and open up sensitive public land to drilling – offering polluters a virtual license to kill. "This is, without doubt, the most anti-environmental Congress in history," said Rep. Henry Waxman, the ranking Democrat on the House Energy Committee.

Under the Republicans, the House has voted to ban the EPA from placing limits on climate-warming pollution, to reverse new fuel standards projected to slash dependence on foreign oil and save Americans \$1.7 trillion at the pump, and to end standards signed into law by President Bush that would phase out wasteful, high-wattage incandescent light bulbs. Even more reckless, the House voted to block limits on deadly mercury emissions – a move that federal scientists calculate would result in 20,000 premature deaths – and drop safeguards on cement manufacturing that would kill another 12,500 Americans and lead to thousands of avoidable heart attacks.

In February, over the objections of the State Department, the House voted to approve the Keystone XL pipeline, which would transport toxic tar sands from Canada across the Midwest's largest and most vulnerable supply of drinking water. In that same vote, the House returned to the great dream of the Bush era, voting to permit the oil industry to drill in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. In an even more sweeping move, the House passed a bill to block all new major regulations until the nation's unemployment rate falls to six percent – a measure that would choke off not only new environmental safeguards, but also the new limits on Wall Street recklessness required under Dodd-Frank.

### BASH IMMIGRANTS

In June, the house approved a raft of amendments blocking Obama's executive directives on immigration reform. The legislation would prevent the administration from prioritizing the deportation of violent criminals over law-abiding immigrants, and put Homeland Security back in the business of deporting the undocumented spouses of American citizens. The House even found a way to merge its dirty-energy agenda with its anti-immigrant stance, passing a "border bill" that bars enforcement of 16 key environmental laws – including the Endangered Species Act – on federal land within 100 miles of the Mexican border. The bill is a sop to the Minuteman crowd, who don't want to contend with environmental rules as they erect electrified fences to keep out immigrants. But the measure is so broadly written that it also applies to the Canadian border, opening up places like Glacier National Park in Montana to bulldozers. Rep. Denny Rehberg, a Republican from Montana, calls the bill "absolutely necessary" to secure his state from "drug dealers, human traffickers and terrorists."

In perhaps its most absurd gesture, the House GOP managed to weave together its hatred of immigrants and abortions, passing a rider that bans the government from providing abortions to immigrants in detention. The move is a brave solution in search of an actual problem: Federal agencies have never paid for such a procedure.

### ENRICH BILLIONAIRES

House Republicans have voted three times to extend all of the Bush-era tax cuts – a move that would blow a \$3.8 trillion hole in the budget over the next decade. In fact, the Ryan budget – twice approved by the House – goes even further, doling out another \$2.5 trillion to the wealthiest Americans by reducing the tax rate on top earners from 35 to just 25 percent, lowering the corporate rate to 25 percent, and ending the alternative minimum tax, a safeguard against tax cheats.

Romney, in fact, wants to give away even more to the rich than Republicans in the House by permanently eliminating the estate tax – a proposal that alarms veterans of the first Bush administration. "Given the vast amounts of wealth that have accumulated at the very, very, very top, it's an odd time to be eliminating this most progressive element of the tax system," says Michael Graetz, a former deputy assistant Treasury secretary under Bush. Over a decade, Romney's gift to the nation's most fortunate families would allow their heirs to pocket at least \$1 trillion (including up to \$50 million for Mitt's own heirs).

Those without family fortunes, meanwhile, would see their taxes soar. Independent tax groups have concluded that the only way to replace the tax revenue lost by the proposed Ryan and Romney tax cuts would be to end tax breaks – like the one for home-mortgage interest – that directly benefit the middle class. And the poor would get the shaft: The Ryan budget slashes the Child Tax Credit, meaning that a single mother of two earning the minimum wage would watch her annual tax bill rise by more than \$1,500.

### SLASH GOVERNMENT

Under the Ryan blueprint approved by the House and voted for by 40 GOP senators, government spending on everything that's not Medicare, Medicaid and Social Security – NASA, highways, education, you name it – would be cut in half by 2022 and nearly in half again by 2050, until it stands at just 3.5 percent of the economy. As the Congressional Budget Service notes, such spending levels would be unprecedented in modern times: Since World War II, the government's discretionary spending has never fallen below eight percent of GDP.

If signed into law by President Romney, the Ryan budget would slash spending on college tuition grants by 42 percent next year and kick 1 million students out of the program. It would also gut funding for public schools, food and drug safety, basic science research, law enforcement and low-income housing. The cuts to food stamps alone would total \$134 billion over the next decade. Ripping Ryan for trying to cloak his budget in Catholic doctrine, priests and faculty from Georgetown University wrote, "Your budget appears to reflect the values of your favorite philosopher, Ayn Rand, rather than the gospel of Jesus Christ." There is one place, however, where Republicans want to increase spending: Under the most recent Ryan budget, the Pentagon would receive an extra \$29 billion a year, reversing Obama's modest efforts to slow the growth of defense spending. Where would the extra cash come from? In May, the House approved a Ryan bill to replace automatic cuts to the Pentagon under the debt-ceiling agreement with \$261 billion in cuts to the federal safety net. The measure would deny food stamps to 1.8 million Americans, leave 280,000 kids without school lunches and cut off health care to 300,000 poor children.

## DESTROY HEALTH CARE

Republicans in the House have voted more than 30 times to repeal Obamacare – a move that would deplete the Medicare trust fund eight years early, kick 6.6 million young adults off their parents' health insurance, cost seniors \$700 more on average for prescription drugs, and make it legal once again for insurance companies to charge women more than men and to rescind policies when people get sick. At the same time, repealing Obamacare would provide a massive giveback to the rich, handing over nearly \$400 billion in tax revenues to those who earn above \$250,000 a year.

To further boost the profits of insurance companies, the House passed a Ryan plan to voucherize Medicare, subjecting seniors to the whims of the private market. In the first year alone, according to the Congressional Budget Office, the cost to seniors would more than double, to \$12,500 – and taxpayers would not save a dime, as private insurers pocketed the money. By 2050, as inflation took its toll, buying a policy as good as present-day Medicare would cost an 85-year-old more than \$50,000. The Ryan plan would also eviscerate Medicaid by turning federal contributions to the program into lump-sum "block grants" that states can administer as they see fit. The trouble is that the grants, like Medicare vouchers, won't keep pace with soaring health care costs. In the first decade alone, the plan would bilk states out of \$810 billion and deny health care to 30 million poor children, disabled Americans and seniors.

The last time a Republican presidential candidate touted an agenda to cut spending, lower taxes, boost defense and balance the budget was Ronald Reagan in 1980. Like Romney and Ryan, Reagan didn't have an actual plan for his spending cuts – they were an accounting fantasy, openly joked about as the "magic asterisk." In the end, as promised, Reagan's tax cuts went through, and the Pentagon's budget soared. But the spending cuts never materialized – so Reagan wound up *tripling* the debt.

If it didn't work for Reagan, says his former budget director, it would be foolish to assume Romney and Ryan can do better. "The Republican record on spending control is so abysmally bad," Stockman says, "that at this point they don't have a leg to stand on." Indeed, the last GOP administration turned \$5 trillion in projected surplus into \$5 trillion of new debt.

No one doubts Ryan's determination to slash the social safety net: Of the \$5.3 trillion in cuts he has proposed, nearly two-thirds come from programs for the poor. But when it comes time to eviscerate the rest of the federal budget, Stockman says – funding for things like drug enforcement and public schools – Congress will "never cut those programs that deeply." In short, the rich will get their tax cuts. The poor will be left destitute. But America will be driven even deeper into debt.

That, at heart, is the twisted beauty of the plan being championed by Ryan and Romney: The higher Republicans manage to drive up the debt, the more ammunition they have in their fight to slash federal spending for the needy. And the more time they waste trumpeting their "fiscal discipline," the more the nation's infrastructure will continue to crumble around them. Squandering two full workweeks of the congressional calendar on votes to repeal Obamacare has cost taxpayers \$48 million. That's nearly the same amount of money now needed to repair cracks in the Capitol itself – spending the House GOP has refused to authorize, out of anti-governmental spite. "If the House wants the dome to fall in," said Senate Appropriations chair Ben Nelson, "I hope it falls on their side." If the

Republicans experience a crushing blow as a result of their hard-right agenda, of course, it won't be caused by the laws of physics – it will be delivered by the voters on Election Day.

20120928-01 09:21 SteveB "A Culture of Delusion"

"A Culture of Delusion" by Paul Craig Roberts, OpEdNews

Sept. 27, 2012 (<http://www.opednews.com/articles/A-Culture-of-Delusion-by-Paul-Craig-Roberts-120927-669.html>)

A writer's greatest disappointments are readers who have knee-jerk responses. Not all readers, of course. Some readers are thoughtful and supportive. Others express thanks for opening their eyes. But the majority are happy when a writer tells them what they want to hear and are unhappy when he writes what they don't want to hear.

For the left-wing, Ronald Reagan is the great bogeyman. Those on the left don't understand supply-side economics as a macroeconomic innovation that cured stagflation by utilizing the impact of fiscal policy on aggregate supply. Instead, they see "trickle-down economics" and tax cuts for the rich. Leftists don't understand that the Reagan administration intervened in Grenada and Nicaragua in order to signal to the Soviets that there would be no more Soviet expansion or client states and that it was time to negotiate the end of the cold war. Instead, leftists see in Reagan the origin of rule by the one percent and the neoconservatives' wars for US hegemony.

In 1981 curtailing inflation meant collapsing nominal GNP and tax revenues. The result would be budget deficits -- anathema to Republicans -- during the period of readjustment. Ending the cold war meant curtailing the military/security complex and raised the specter in conservative circles of "the anti-Christ" Gorbachev deceiving Reagan and taking over the world.

In pursuing his two main goals, Reagan was up against his own constituency and relied on rhetoric to keep his constituency on board with his agenda. The left wing heard the rhetoric but failed to comprehend the agenda.

When I explain these facts, easily and abundantly documented, some of leftist persuasion send in condescending and insulting emails telling me that they look forward to the day that I stop lying about Reagan and tell the truth about Reagan like I do about everything else.

"Knee-jerk liberal" is a favorite term of conservatives. But conservatives can be just as knee-jerk. When I object to Washington's wars, the mistreatment of detainees and the suspension of civil liberties, some on the right tell me that if I hate America so much I should move to Cuba. Many Republicans cannot get their minds around the fact that if civil liberties are subject to the government's arbitrary discretion, then civil liberties do not exist. The flag-waving element of the population is prone to confuse loyalty to the country with loyalty to the government, unless, of course, there's a Democrat in the White House.

Rationally, it makes no sense for readers to think that a writer who would lie to them about one thing would tell them the truth about another. But as long as they hear what they want to hear, it is the truth. If they don't want to hear it, it is a lie.

Both left and right also confuse explanations with justifications.

When a writer writes about the perils that we as a society face and the implications, it is very discouraging for the writer to know that many readers will not listen unless it is what they want to hear. This discouragement is precisely what every truth-teller faces, which is why there are so few of them.

This is one reason I stopped writing a couple of years ago. I found that solid facts and sound analysis could not penetrate brainwashed and closed minds seeking vindication to keep the mind locked tightly against unsettling truths. Americans want to have their beliefs vindicated more than they want the truth. The success of print and TV pundits is based on allying with a prominent point of view or interest group and serving it. Those served make the writer or talking head successful. I never thought much of that kind of success.

But success as a prostitute is about the only kind of success that can occur in Washington or in the media these days. Those who refuse to prostitute themselves arouse pity and denunciation, not admiration. A couple of years ago an acquaintance from a university in the northeast called me to say he had recently had lunch with some of my former associates in Washington. When he inquired about me, he said the response was, "Poor Craig, if he hadn't turned critic, he would be worth tens of millions of dollars like us."

I replied that my former associates were undoubtedly correct. My acquaintance said that he hadn't realized that he was having lunch with a bunch of prostitutes.

The incentive to speak the truth and the reward for doing so are very weak. And not just for a writer, but also for academics and experts who can make far more money by lying than by telling the truth. How else would we have got GMOs, jobs offshoring, the "unitary executive," and a deregulated financial system? It is a very lucrative career to testify as an expert in civil lawsuits. It is part of America's romance with the lie that experts purchased by the opposing sides in a lawsuit battle it out as gladiators seeking the jury's thumbs-up.

And look at Congress. The two members of the House who stood up for the Constitution and truth in government will soon be gone. Ron Paul is stepping down, and Dennis Kucinich was redistricted out of his seat. As for the Senate, these thoughtful personages recently voted 90-1 to declare war on Iran, as the sole dissenter, Rand Paul, pointed out. The Senate is very much aware, although only a few will publicly admit it, that the US has been totally frustrated and held to a standoff, if not a defeat, in Afghanistan and is unable to subdue the Taliban. Despite this, the Senate wants a war with Iran, a war which could easily turn out to be even less successful. Obviously, the Senate not only lies to the public but also to itself.

Last week the Pentagon chief, Panetta, told China that the new US naval, air, and troop bases surrounding China are not directed at China. What else could be the purpose of the new bases? Washington is so accustomed to lying and to being believed that Panetta actually thinks China will believe his completely transparent lie. Panetta has confused China with the American people: tell them what they want to hear, and they will believe it.

Americans live in a matrix of lies. They seldom encounter a truthful statement. There is no evidence that Americans can any longer tell the difference between the truth and a lie. Americans fell for all of these lies and more: Saddam Hussein has weapons of mass destruction and al Qaeda connections. Saddam Hussein's troops seized Kuwaiti babies from incubators and threw them on the floor. Gaddafi fed his troops Viagra to help them rape Libyan women. Iran has a nuclear weapons program. Change--yes we can! The US is "the indispensable country." America is broke because of food stamps and Social Security, not because of wars, bankster bailouts, and a failing economy. Russia is America's number one enemy. China is America's number one enemy. Iran is a terrorist state. Jobs offshoring is free trade and good for the US economy. Israel is America's most loyal ally. The US missile shield surrounding Russia is not directed at Russia. The South China sea is an area of US national interest. Financial markets are self-regulating.

The list is endless. Lies dominate every policy discussion, every political decision. The most successful people in America are liars.

The endless lies have created a culture of delusion. And this is why America is lost. The beliefs of many Americans, perhaps a majority, are comprised of lies. These beliefs have become emotional crutches, and Americans will fight to defend the lies that they believe. The inability of Americans to accept facts that are contrary to their beliefs is the reason the country is leaderless and will remain so. Unless scales fall from Americans' eyes, Americans are doomed.

[20120928-02](#)

09:35

SteveB

"François Hollande Opts to Punish French Rich with €20bn of New Taxes"

It's a good thing Mitt Romney was only a (haha) missionary in France and doesn't live in France, or he wouldn't like his new 75% tax rate very well...

Once again, French common sense leads the world! And, for once, I don't mean that sarcastically.

"François Hollande Opts to Punish French Rich with €20bn of New Taxes" by John Lichfield, *The Independent*

Sept. 29, 2012, (<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/francois-hollande-opts-to-punish-french-rich-with-20bn-of-new-taxes-8190467.html>)

(Socialist government unveils 75 per cent levy on top earners as part of 2013 austerity budget.)

(PARIS) France's Socialist government insisted yesterday that it could solve the conundrum of simultaneous deficit-cutting and growth which has eluded every other European country from Greece to Britain.

As new clouds gathered over the eurozone, President François Hollande pushed ahead with the country's toughest budget for three decades, taking €20bn (£16bn) of new taxes from big businesses and the wealthy but imposing relatively moderate €10bn cuts on state spending.

With growth stagnant and unemployment rising sharply, the success or failure of the 2013 budget could decide whether Europe's second-largest economy becomes part of solution to the eurozone crisis or a new, and devastating, part of the problem.

International markets became jittery once again yesterday about the prospects for economic and political meltdown in Spain and Greece, following a broadly positive response to the tough budget announced by Madrid on Thursday. An independent audit of Spain's troubled banks showed a shortfall of €59.3bn. The findings of the stress test will help Madrid decide how much money it will tap from a €100bn European loan facility to prop up its financial sector. Jean-Claude Juncker, head of the group of eurozone finance ministers, said he was "comforted" by the results of the test.

If the Spanish budget was tough, the France's was equally so. It reduced the projected state deficit next year to 3 per cent of gross domestic product from 4.6 per cent this year – but most of the pain will fall on big business and wealthy taxpayers rather than public spending. Among other things, the budget introduces Mr Hollande's "temporary" 75 per cent tax on personal earnings over €1m and abolishes the tax breaks on large firms introduced by his predecessor, Nicolas Sarkozy.

The Prime Minister, Jean-Marc Ayrault, spoke of a "fighting budget" which would help to get France "back on track" after 38 years of successive state deficits. He insisted the target of 0.8 per cent growth next year was realistic and would be achieved.

But opposition politicians said the budget had been "muddled together", and was more concerned with preserving Mr Hollande's campaign promises than addressing France's – and Europe's – deepening economic crisis. They pointed out that, while almost all European countries were cutting back spending, the French budget for 2013 preserved the 56 per cent of GDP spent by the state and marginally increased the number of state employees, by 6,000.

In his successful campaign in the spring, Mr Hollande promised to honour France's EU commitments to cut public deficits while rekindling growth and reversing the rise in unemployment – something that has eluded every other developed economy since the financial crisis began in 2007.

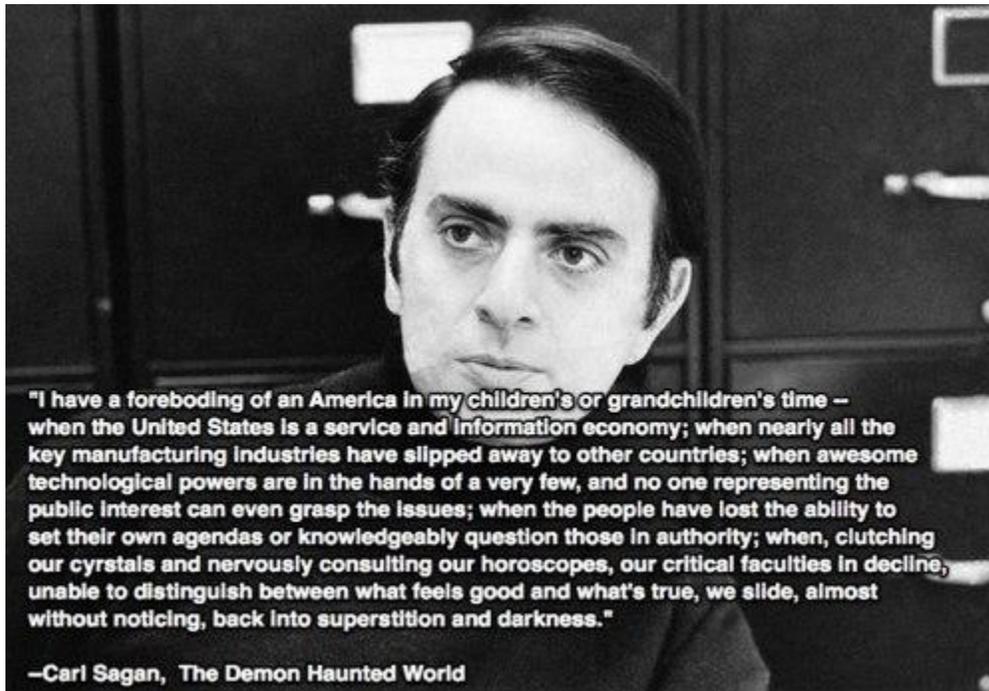
He insisted that this could be done by making the rich pay a "fairer" share of the cost of the state and imposing modest cuts in spending while introducing EU-funded infrastructure projects and job-creation schemes for the young.

Despite the collapse of his popularity and a worsening economic climate at home, Mr Hollande largely stuck to his guns yesterday. Cuts in state spending will be limited to a freeze on hiring in most ministries. There will be some delays or cuts in cultural and transport projects. There will be a new 45 per cent tax band for income above €150,000 and, for two years only, a 75 per tax on earnings of more than €1m.

Critics complained, however, that the budget did nothing to tackle the erosion of France's international competitiveness, which has been blamed for large-scale redundancies in the car industry and other sectors. The cost of employing a worker in France has increase by 28 per cent in the past decade, compared with an 8 per cent increase in Germany.

On Monday, Greece will reveal a draft budget for 2013 which is expected to make new cuts in state spending in an attempt to satisfy markets and the country's troika of bailout trustees – the European Commission, the European Central Bank and the International Monetary Fund.

[20120928-03](#) 11:40 Bill Quote: Carl Sagan on Education in America



[20120928-07](#) 15:31 SteveB Re: Quote: Carl Sagan on Education in America (reply to Bill, above)

Definitely a good one! Thanks, Bill.

[20120928-05](#) 13:54 SandyI Fw: Clint Eastwood

[Source of original email unknown. Possibly: <http://www.isiahfactor.com/2012/09/24/fans-turn-on-clint-eastwood/>. –SteveB]

Clint Eastwood has a movie coming out next week, *Trouble with the Curve*. Yes, the same Clint Eastwood who tried to marginalize our President at the RNC a few weeks ago. Now it's time to return the favor to Mr. Eastwood.

Make sure that you are not one of the people sitting in the audience watching this movie. He used the empty chair to make his point, now we are going to use the empty seats at the theaters where this movie is being shown to make our point. I have always liked Eastwood's movies until he pulled this stupid stunt and showed his true colors, "Black & White" Tea Party Member.

Make sure that you send this to everyone you know. The message has to be sent. The message: There will always be consequences as the result of your actions! He just made my day!

"May the neighbors respect you, trouble neglect you, the angels protect you, and heaven accept you."

Don't let yesterday use up too much of today. —Cherokee wisdom

[20120928-17](#) 23:57 Art Re: Clint Eastwood (reply to SandyI, above)

Agree!

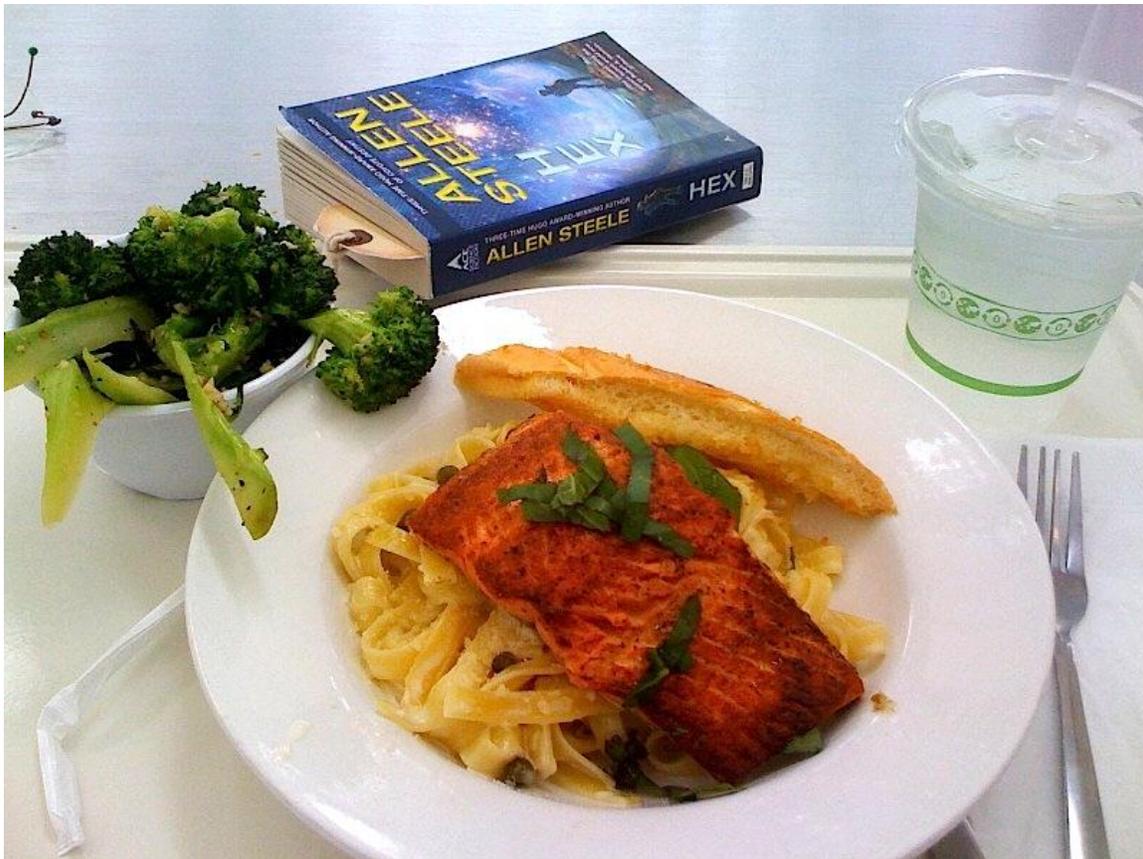
[20120928-06](#) 14:45 Ben Photo: Today's Seafood Lunch at Apple

Double AI: That's Fettuccini Alfredo, eaten outside. Great combo!

This was a collaboration between Chef Clark (on the gas grill over two burners of the pasta station) and Chef Patricia (exercising her native Sicilian skills with the pasta and alfredo sauce).

There was a brief delay while I happily waited at the Asian line for more broccoli to emerge from the kitchen; I'd made my decision to pass on the delicious-looking (confirmed true by several actual diners) Kung Pau Shrimp, in deference to the line being out of white rice, which seems only right to me for Chinese dishes. Had to have that veggie: hence, the side of garlic broccoli.

Cup on the tray, I proceeded to Pasta Land, and watched Chef Clark deftly repopulate the griddle with more salmon filets as Chef Patricia refreshed noodles for my plate, and applied a liberal scoop of her delicious Alfredo sauce. (Is that 'Alfredo', or 'al Fredo'? Hafta look that one up somewhere...) Chef Clark dusted my pasta with capers, added a carefully selected filet (he knows exactly how I like mine: a bit toward the rare side, just slightly dark inside, for salmon), and garnished with narrow strips of fresh basil. A perfect presentation, as you can see:



Seared Salmon Fettuccini Alfredo w/ Broccoli Side

20120928-08 17:20 SteveB Stock Market

If a businessman is the best thing for the economy, and if President Obama is a "disaster" and a "socialist" (as Republicans insist!)...

**SHOULDN'T THE STOCK MARKETS BE *CRASHING* RIGHT NOW INSTEAD OF DRAMATICALLY *RISING*???**

20120928-09 17:33 Ben Re: Stock Market (reply to SteveB, above)

Is this a trick question?

20120928-11 17:38 SteveB Re: Stock Market (reply to Ben, above)

LOL!

20120928-12 17:44 Ben Re: Stock Market (reply to SteveB, above)

ROFLWAALITAFH\*

\*Rolling on floor laughing with arms and legs in the air flapping helplessly

20120928-10 17:35 SteveB Our Latest Friends of the Middle eBook

The October, 2012, collected edition of the *FotM Newsletter* has now been published online as a PDF ebook.

To read or download, click on the link or cover photo, below.

Thanks to all of you! Have a great weekend, especially you, Art, there in Turkey! Be careful!

<http://www.friendsofthemiddle.org/2012-newsletters/201209-FotM-Newsletters.pdf>



20120928-13 18:59 Pam Re: Our Latest Friends of the Middle eBook (reply to SteveB, above)

This is great, Steve. I am astounded at your enterprise and so grateful to be part of it

20120929-05 12:25 SteveB Graphic: "Money Masters"

Good graphic w/ lots of good economic statistics for the class war!

<http://www.nationofchange.org/money-masters-1348932950>

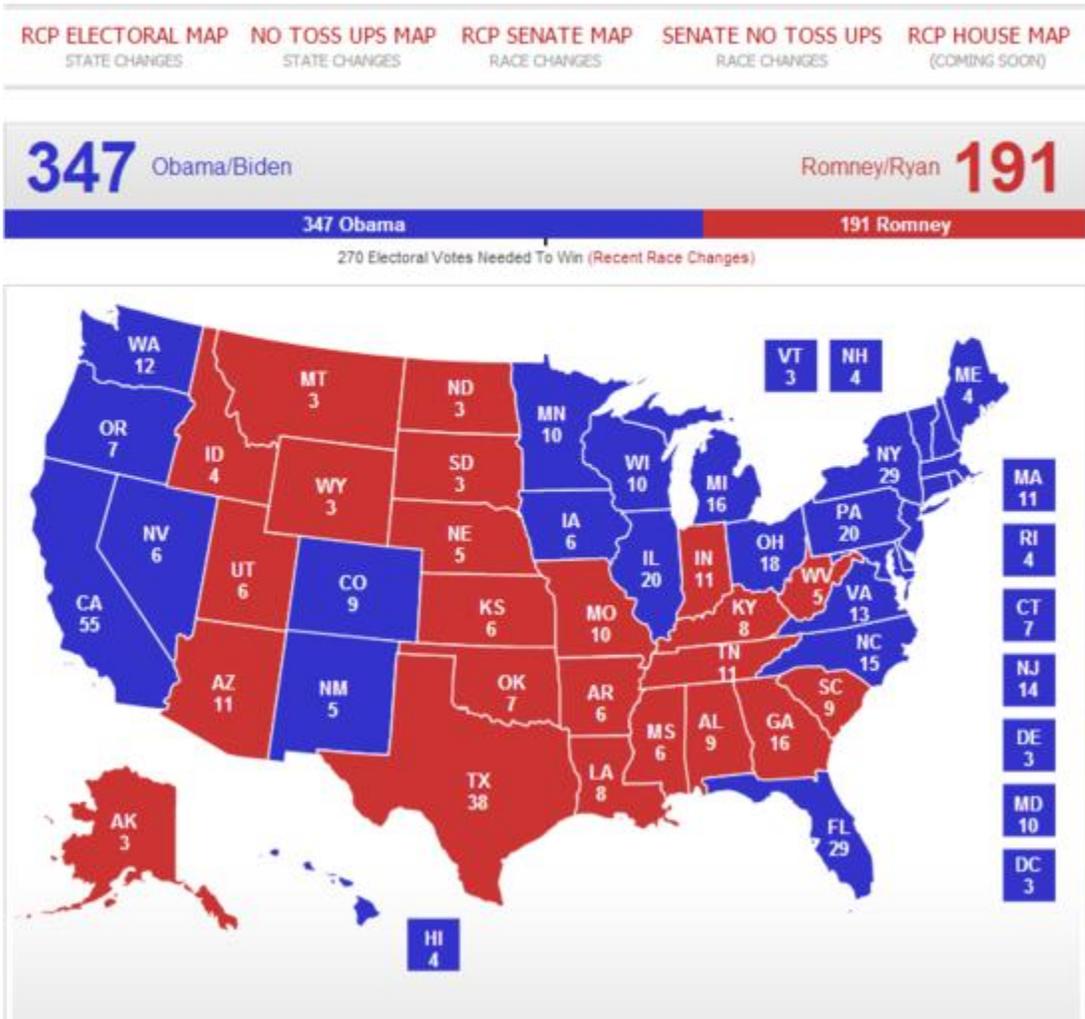
20120929-06 14:52 Dennis Video: "Green Party Presidential Forum: Roseanne Barr & Jill Stein"

For some intelligent political thought....Think Green....

[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5WGLi5\\_i0xQ&feature=related](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5WGLi5_i0xQ&feature=related)

20120929-07 22:56 SteveB Graphic: No Swing States Left?

# NO TOSS UP STATES



"Romney or Obama? Political Scientists Make Their Predictions" by Dan Balz, *The Washington Post*

Sept. 29, 2012, ([http://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/decision2012/romney-or-obama-political-scientists-make-their-predictions/2012/09/29/c2804842-0a5d-11e2-9eea-333857f6a7bd\\_story.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/decision2012/romney-or-obama-political-scientists-make-their-predictions/2012/09/29/c2804842-0a5d-11e2-9eea-333857f6a7bd_story.html))

Are you ready to call the election? Mitt Romney certainly isn't, nor, for that matter, is President Obama. But a few hardy academics have done so. Out now are a baker's dozen forecasts produced by political scientists that predict the outcome in November.

Polls give Obama the advantage, nationally and in most of the battleground states, but they are, as is often said, snapshots in time, not predictions of the future. The election forecasts are in fact predictions, based on various and varied statistical models. Most give the advantage to the president, but the verdict is not unanimous.

The 13 projections are contained in the new issue of *PS: Political Science and Politics*, which is published by the American Political Science Association. Eight of them project that Obama will win the popular vote; five say the popular vote will go to Romney. But the degree of certainty in those forecasts differs. One projection favoring the president says there is an 88 percent certainty that he'll win, while two others forecasting Obama say there is only a 57 percent certainty.

James E. Campbell, the department chairman at the University at Buffalo in New York, who wrote the introduction to the package, rates them this way: Five predict that Obama will win a plurality of the two-party vote, although three are on "the cusp of a toss-up." Five predict that Romney will win the plurality of the two-party vote. Three are in what he calls the toss-up range.

One of the most bullish of the Obama-will-win projections comes from Helmut Norpoth, a professor at Stony Brook University, and Michael Bednarczuk, a grad student at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. They wrote that Obama will defeat Romney "by a comfortable margin."

Their projection, made 299 days before the election, is based on a model that takes into account the performance of the candidates in the primaries and presidential election cycles. "In plain English," they wrote, "Obama has history on his side as well as the fact that he was unchallenged in the primaries."

One of the most bearish about the president's prospects is Alfred G. Cuzan, the department chairman at the University of West Florida. He notes that since 1880, a sitting president has lost his reelection bid only six times, and only twice when the incumbent had succeeded a president of a different party.

But Cuzan, whose model is called the "Fiscal Model," looks at changes in government spending relative to the size of the economy as his guide. He argues that the expansionary spending policies of the president dim his chances of winning.

"Even if he does squeeze by the Republican candidate," Cuzan wrote, "it is highly likely that President Obama would do so with a smaller share of the vote than in 2008, the first president in well over a century to be reelected to a second term by a thinner margin of victory than he received the first time around."

Alan Abramowitz, a professor at Emory University, looks at the advantages of incumbency, presidential approval as of the end of June in an election year and change in real gross domestic product in the second quarter of the year. He calls his method the "Time for a Change" model. He also has made adjustments to factor in the increased polarization in the electorate, which he says has affected the impact of certain fundamentals that generally determine the outcome.

He projected a one-point margin for Obama in the popular vote, but added: "Barring any changes in the second quarter GDP estimate, this is the closest popular vote margin predicted by the model in the entire postwar era although it is only slightly smaller than the 1.2 point margin predicted for Jimmy Carter in 1976."

That was before the government revised its second-quarter real GDP growth estimate down from 1.7 percent to 1.3 percent. I e-mailed Abramowitz to ask whether he would change his forecast. He said the idea is to forecast the result before the conventions. He said the new GDP number would reduce Obama's predicted margin but said the president's better approval ratings would somewhat offset that. He also said he believes the race will tighten before November.

Campbell also foresees a close outcome, but he still tipped in Obama's direction. He uses two different models, although both include real GDP as one of the factors. Incumbency, he notes, is one big advantage for the president, while the economy is obviously Obama's problem. In terms of economic growth, he noted, Obama ranks eighth out of the past 10 presidents who sought reelection.

Veteran modeler Michael Lewis-Beck of the University of Iowa and Charles Tien, the department chairman at Hunter College in New York, offer contrasting forecasts based on competing models.

A traditional "Jobs Model" shows Obama in deep trouble. But using a different model, they see Obama winning. Forced to choose between the two, they stick to the jobs model, which shows Obama capturing about 48 percent of the vote. Conceding that any inherent margin for error could result in an Obama victory, they nonetheless concluded, "It still suggests an Obama victory is unlikely."

Robert Erikson, a Columbia University professor, and Christopher Wlezien of Temple University use a wide variety of economic measures in their "Leading Economic Indicators and the Polls" model. They noted the disparity between perceptions of business conditions and leading economic indicators on the one hand and income growth on the other. Four years ago, the first two were at historic lows while income growth was "middling." This year it is the reverse.

They ask: "What does this suggest about President Obama's electoral fate? Is it a dismal election-year economy that dooms the president to certain defeat? Or are economic circumstances brighter than the income numbers would indicate, offering promise of reelection?"

Their answer, made a month before the party conventions, was for a very close election with Obama slightly favored, despite the fact that economic conditions alone would seem to make Romney the heavy favorite.

Douglas A. Hibbs, a retired professor of economics and political science, uses a "Bread and Peace" model — the classic construct of peace and prosperity as the only two factors that really count in presidential elections. He looks at per capita disposable income and U.S. military fatalities in foreign conflicts.

Hibbs projects that, on the basis of his model, Obama will almost certainly lose to Romney. But he is quick to note that he "deviates substantially from prevailing views — particularly those in which I generally put greatest stock: betting price data at the Iowa Electronic Market and Intrade," which he notes has been bullish about Obama's chances of winning.

Thomas Holbrook, department chairman at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, uses only a few measures in his model: presidential approval and satisfaction with personal finances, while taking into account whether one candidate is an incumbent. "This portends a close election, but one in which Mitt Romney is the favorite."

Three models attempt to project Electoral College results rather than the popular vote. One projects Obama with 213 electoral votes, another with 324 electoral votes (but allows that Romney could win) and a third with 301 votes while acknowledging "a great deal of uncertainty about the outcome."

Several of these scholars will talk more about forecasting elections on Oct. 16 at the National Press Club. In the meantime, as pollsters continue to track the race, they've boldly made their predictions and will await the real results along with the rest of the country.

[Source of original email unknown. –SteveB]

Dear Red States:

We're ticked off at your Neanderthal attitudes and politics and we've decided we're leaving. "Legitimate rape." Sheesh!

We in New York intend to form our own country and we're taking the other Blue States with us.

In case you aren't aware that includes California, Hawaii, Oregon, Washington, Minnesota, Wisconsin, Michigan, Illinois and the rest of the Northeast.

We believe this split will be beneficial to the nation and especially to the people of the new country of The Enlightened States of America (E.S.A).

To sum up briefly:

- You get Texas, Oklahoma and all the slave states.
- We get stem cell research and the best beaches.
- We get Andrew Cuomo and Elizabeth Warren. You get Bobby Jindal and Todd Akin.
- We get the Statue of Liberty. You get OpryLand.
- We get Intel and Microsoft. You get WorldCom.
- We get Harvard. You get Ole' Miss.
- We get 85 percent of America's venture capital and entrepreneurs.
- You get Alabama.
- We get two-thirds of the tax revenue. You get to make the red states pay their fair share.

Since our aggregate divorce rate is 22 percent lower than the Christian Coalition's we get a bunch of happy families. You get a bunch of single moms.

Please be aware that the E.S.A. will be pro choice and anti war and we're going to want all our citizens back from Afghanistan at once. If you need people to fight, ask your evangelicals. They have kids they're apparently willing to send to their deaths for no purpose and they don't care if you don't show pictures of their children's caskets coming home.

We wish you success in Afghanistan, and possibly Iran as well, but we're not willing to spend our resources in these sorts of pursuits.

With the Blue States in hand we will have firm control of 80% of the country's fresh water, more than 90% of the pineapple and lettuce, 92% of the nation's fresh fruit, 95% of America's quality wines (you can serve French wines at state dinners) 90% of all cheese, 90 percent of the high tech industry, most of the US low sulfur coal, all living redwoods, sequoias and condors, all the Ivy and Seven Sister schools plus Harvard, Yale, Stanford, Cal Tech and MIT.

With the Red States you will have to cope with 88% of all obese Americans and their projected health care costs, 92% of all US mosquitoes, nearly 100% of the tornadoes, 90% of the hurricanes, 99% of all Southern Baptists, virtually 100% of all televangelists, Rush Limbaugh, Bob Jones University, Clemson and the University of Georgia.

We get Hollywood and Yosemite, thank you.

38% of those in the Red states believe Jonah was actually swallowed by a whale, 62% believe life is sacred unless we're discussing the death penalty or gun laws, 44% say that evolution is only a theory, 53% that Saddam was involved in 9/11 and 61% of you crazy bastards believe you are people with higher morals than we lefties.

We're taking the good weed too. You can have that crap they grow in Mexico.

Sincerely, Stan Singer, Citizen of the Enlightened States of America

<a href="#">20120930-03</a>	17:26	Tom	"The Grieving Father Obama Hasn't Spoken To"
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#### Another solemn story of sacrifice

In our continuing series covering the victims of insider attacks in Afghanistan, Dan Anders, father of fallen soldier Spc. Mabry Anders came on the show to celebrate his son's legacy. His son lived in fear of the local forces he worked with. Army Specialist Anders was only 21-years-old when he was killed in a "green-on-blue" attack by an Afghan police officer. But as his son's killer ran away, the Army helicopter had to ask for permission to kill a man who had just gunned down two American soldiers.

Mr. Anders told us that he had gotten more information about his son's death from the media than he had from the US military. He told Laura that the White House sent him a bland form letter without any personal details of his son's life or personality. Anders told our listeners that Obama never called or wrote him after his son's death.

Audio:

<http://www.lauraingraham.com/pg/jsp/charts/streamingAudioMaster.jsp?dispid=302&headerDest=L3BnL2pzcC9tZWRpYS9mbGFzaHdlbGNvbWUuanNwP3BpZD0xMzYxNQ%3D%3D>.

<a href="#">20120930-04</a>	17:41	Tom	"Russia Reasserts Ownership Over the North Pole"
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"Russia Reasserts Ownership Over the North Pole" by Bruce Jones and Tom Parfitt, *The Telegraph*/Business Insider Sept. 28, 2012, (<http://www.businessinsider.com/russia-reasserts-ownership-over-the-north-pole-2012-9>)

A Russian Orthodox bishop has lowered a "holy memorial capsule" into the sea at the North Pole in an attempt to "consecrate" the Arctic and reassert Moscow's claims to the territory.

The service was held by Bishop Iakov on the ice alongside the nuclear icebreaker *Rossiya* during a polar expedition titled "Arctic-2012", organised by the country's Arctic and Antarctic Research Institute.

The metal capsule carried the blessings of the church's leader, bearing the inscription: "With the blessing of Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia, the consecration of the North Pole marks 1150 years of Russian Statehood."

The Kremlin is keen to claim the hydrocarbon riches off its northern coast despite territorial claims from other governments, and is gradually re-militarising the area.

A conservative Moscow think-tank suggested in July that the Arctic Ocean should be renamed the "Russian Ocean" and this week it was announced that MiG-31 supersonic interceptor aircraft will be based in the region by the end of the year.

Patriarch Kirill, the head of the Russian Orthodox Church, is a close ally of President Vladimir Putin, who says exploiting oil and gas reserves in the North is a "strategic priority".

At the North Pole, the bishop's service was attended by a small group of scientists and the *Rossiya*'s captain Oleg Shchapin.

It was held during an expedition to find a floe suitable for Russia's 40th drifting polar research station and to deliver a 17-strong team to man the outpost for the next year.

The consecration earlier this month highlights Russia's urge to claim international waters beyond its continental shelf because of underwater ridges it says are attached to the mainland.

Bishop Iakov, who is thought to be the first Russian priest to visit the pole, emphasised that the consecration symbolised efforts "to restore Russia's position and confirm its achievements in the Arctic".

In 2007, in another political move, Russia planted its flag on the seabed below the polar ice cap using a remotely operated mini-submarine, symbolically laying claim to the surrounding area.

The Rossiya carried on its voyage an icon and holy relics of St. Nicholas the Miracle Worker, the patron saint of sailors, normally kept in the diocese's main church on dry land.

Bishop Iakov was appointed last year as bishop of the newly created, most northerly diocese of Naryan-Mar and Mezen, which lies inside the Arctic Circle on the White and Barents Seas.

The diocese includes the islands of Novaya Zemlya and Franz Josef Land, where airfields have recently been upgraded by the Russian Air Force as operational strategic bomber stations.

One airbase on Graham Bell Island boasts a 7,000-foot year-round compacted ice runway.

Bishop Iakov has taken part in other polar missions, sailing the length of the contested Northern Sea Route between Scandinavia and Alaska along Russia's Arctic coast, which Russia claims and seeks to charge ships for using like the Panama Canal, but is regarded by most other countries as international waters.

In 2004 the bishop consecrated an Orthodox church in Antarctica at Russia's Bellingshausen research base.

<a href="#">20120930-05</a>	18:11	Tom	"Speak Up: US Law Enforcement to Use Russian Software to Store Millions of Voices"
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"Speak Up: US Law Enforcement to Use Russian Software to Store Millions of Voices" by Katerina Azarova, RT  
Sept. 23, 2012, (<http://rt.com/usa/news/law-enforcement-voice-recognition-759/>)

The US government has already proven its intent to see all evil, with the use of Orwellian programs like TrapWire. But it can now hear all evil too, as law enforcement agencies implement a tool able to store, analyze and identify voices in seconds.

'Voice Grid Nation' is a system that uses advanced algorithms to match identities to voices. Brought to the US by Russia's Speech Technology Center, it claims to be capable of allowing police, federal agencies and other law enforcement personnel to build up a huge database containing up to several million voices.

When authorities intercept a call they've deemed 'hinky', the recording is entered into the VoiceGrid program, which (probably) buzzes and whirrs and spits out a match. In five seconds, the program can scan through 10,000 voices, and it only needs 3 seconds for speech analysis. All that, combined with 100 simultaneous searches and the storage capacity of 2 million samples, gives SpeechPro, as the company is known in the US, the right to claim a 90% success rate.

According to Slate.com's Ryan Gallagher, who spoke with SpeechPro president Aleksey Khitrov, the software is already being used in many different countries and for 'noble causes' only – like in Mexico, where Voice Grid helped identify and apprehend kidnappers during a ransom call, thus saving their victim's life.

Both the FBI and the NSA have expressed interest in the program, which is also expected to be used at 911 call centers and police precincts. And sample lists would, of course, contain 'persons of interest' – known criminals, terror suspects or people on a watch list.

Or would it?

The definition of 'suspect' has been known to be loosely interpreted by US law enforcement agencies in the past. What with the FBI branding people as 'terrorist suspects' for buying waterproof matches or flashlights, and the Department of Homeland Security urging hotel staff to notify authorities immediately if a person has tried to use cash and/or hung a 'do not disturb' sign on their door, it's easy to see why many are spooked by the idea that not only can the government see you at all times, it can also hear you.

In fact, combined with the capabilities of TrapWire, this would give law enforcement agencies an unprecedented ability to effectively dismiss both the country's founding documents and any notion of privacy you may have had.

An unsuspecting, law-abiding citizen would obviously have to read his private messages or broadcast his phone calls out loud to be considered above-board. If he's whispering into his handset, however, the DHS is relying on its "citizen spies" to pounce and denounce the poor guy.

So, law enforcement agencies now have TrapWire to 'all the better to see you with' and Voice Grid 'all the better to hear you with'. That plus the Patriot Act is effectively turning America into the land of the-no-longer-free-and the very agencies that set out to protect their people and their land into the big bad wolf.

The Patriot Act is probably one of the most controversial pieces of legislature in American history, an acronym that, for all the old and new security bureaus, Provides Appropriate Tools Required (to) Intercept (and) Obstruct Terrorism. But the tools included in the bill weren't – and still aren't – considered appropriate by many. Wiretaps and electronic surveillance were legalized. Arrests were made on a daily basis. When the number of those detained reached 1,200, officials stopped counting. Personal records no longer remained personal – and that was only the domestic beginning.

Officially, 1,200 special interest detainees were held and investigated under the Patriot Act. The Justice Department examined more than 700 of them and none were ever linked to any terrorist group or plot.

Nevertheless, upon his resignation in 2004, former Attorney General John Ashcroft's letter stated that "The objective of securing the safety of Americans from crime and terror has been achieved." This should have meant the end of the Patriot Act, for it included a "sunset" provision, to expire in December, 2005. Seven years later, it's still in place and regularly being enforced...not necessarily for a war against terror.

Statistics show that the so-called sneak-and-peak, a search warrant that can be executed without prior warning, is mostly used for drug-related crimes. Between 2006 and 2009, 1,618 delayed-search warrants were issued for drugs, 122 for fraud – and only 15 for terrorism.

The National Defense Authorization Act allows the indefinite detention of anyone deemed a terror suspect – American citizen or not. And if you look at what makes a potential suspect, you can pretty much expect to be taken in every time you answer your phone.

So bottom line: you can be heard making a hotel reservation and then seen trying to pay cash, for example, or looking stressed at breakfast and then detained as a suspect under the NDAA whilst police comb through your files using a warning-less warrant.

But the good thing is: you'll be totally safe.

<a href="#">20120930-06</a>	21:49	Tom	"Obamacare Fines Kick In" & "Tax Penalty to Hit Nearly 6M Uninsured People"
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["Obamacare Fines Kick In" by AP](#)

Sept. 30, 2012, (<http://www.onenewsnow.com/ap/united-states/obamacare-fines-kick-in>)

If you or an elderly relative have been hospitalized recently and noticed extra attention when the time came to be discharged, there's more to it than good customer service.

Starting Monday, Medicare will fine hospitals that have too many patients readmitted within 30 days of discharge due to complications. The penalties are part of a broader push under President Barack Obama's health care law to improve quality while also trying to cut costs.

About two-thirds of the hospitals serving Medicare patients, or some 2,200 facilities, will be hit with penalties averaging around \$125,000 per facility this coming year, according to government estimates.

Data to assess the penalties have been collected and crunched, and Medicare has shared the results with individual hospitals. Medicare plans to post details online later and people can look up how their community hospitals performed.

It adds up to a new way of doing business for hospitals, and they have scrambled to prepare for well over a year. They are working on ways to improve communication with rehabilitation centers and doctors who follow patients after they're released, as well as connecting individually with patients.

"There is a lot of activity at the hospital level to straighten out our internal processes," said Nancy Foster, vice president for quality and safety at the American Hospital Association. "We are also spreading our wings a little and reaching outside the hospital, to the extent that we can, to make sure patients are getting the ongoing treatment they need."

Still, industry officials say they have misgivings about being held liable for circumstances beyond their control. They also complain that facilities serving low-income people, including many major teaching hospitals, are much more likely to be fined, raising questions of fairness.

Consumer advocates say Medicare's nudge to hospitals is long overdue and not nearly stiff enough.

For the first year, the penalty is capped at 1 percent of a hospital's Medicare payments. The overwhelming majority of penalized facilities will pay less. Also, for now, hospitals are only being measured on three medical conditions: heart attacks, heart failure and pneumonia.

Under the health care law, the penalties gradually will rise until 3 percent of Medicare payments to hospitals are at risk.

"Tax Penalty to Hit Nearly 6M Uninsured People" by Ricardo Alonso Zaldivar, AP

Sept. 19, 2012, (<http://timesleader.com/stories/Tax-penalty-to-hit-nearly-6M-uninsured-people,207080>)

(WASHINGTON) Nearly 6 million Americans — most of them in the middle class — will face a tax penalty for not carrying medical coverage once President Barack Obama's health care overhaul law is fully in place, congressional budget analysts said Wednesday.

The new estimate amounts to an inconvenient fact for the administration, a reminder of what critics see as broken promises.

The numbers from the nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office are significantly higher than a previous projection by the same office in 2010, shortly after the law passed.

The earlier estimate found 4 million people would be affected. The difference — 2 million people— represents a 50 percent increase.

That's still only a sliver of the population, given that more than 150 million people currently are covered by employer plans. Nonetheless, in his first campaign for the White House, Obama pledged not to raise taxes on individuals making less than \$200,000 a year and couples making less than \$250,000.

And the budget office analysis found that nearly 80 percent of those who'll face the penalty would be making up to or less than five times the federal poverty level. Currently that would work out to \$55,850 or less for an individual and \$115,250 or less for a family of four.

Average penalty: about \$1,200 in 2016.

"The bad news and broken promises from Obamacare just keep piling up," said Rep. Dave Camp, R-Mich., chairman of the House Ways and Means Committee, who wants to repeal the law.

There was no immediate response from the administration.

The budget office said most of the increase in its estimate is due to changes in underlying projections about the economy, incorporating the effects of new federal legislation, as well as higher unemployment and lower wages.

Starting in 2014, the new health care law requires virtually every legal resident of the U.S. to carry health insurance or face a tax penalty. The Supreme Court upheld Obama's law as constitutional in a 5-4 decision this summer, finding that the insurance mandate and the tax penalty enforcing it fall within the power of Congress to impose taxes. The penalty will be collected by the IRS, just like taxes.

The budget office said the penalty will raise \$6.9 billion when fully in effect in 2016.

The new law will also provide government aid to help middle-class and low-income households afford coverage, the financial carrot that balances out the penalty.

Nonetheless, some people might still decide to remain uninsured because they object to government mandates or because they feel they would come out ahead financially even if they have to pay the penalty. Health insurance is expensive, with employer-provided family coverage averaging nearly \$15,800 a year for a family and \$4,300 for a single plan.

The Supreme Court allowed individual states to opt out of a major Medicaid expansion under the law. The Obama administration says it will exempt low-income people affected by state decisions from having to comply with the insurance mandate.

Most Americans will not have to worry about the insurance requirement since they already have coverage through employers, government programs like Medicare or by buying their own policies.

Many Republicans still regard the insurance mandate as unconstitutional and rue the day the Supreme Court upheld it.

However, the idea for an individual insurance requirement comes from Republican health care plans in the 1990s.

It's also a central element of the 2006 Massachusetts health care law signed by then-GOP Gov. Mitt Romney, now running against Obama and promising to repeal the federal law. The approach seems to have worked well in Massachusetts, with virtually all residents covered and dwindling numbers opting to pay the penalty instead.

20120930-07	22:19	Tom	"Nader Calls Obama a 'War Criminal'"
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"Nader Calls Obama a 'War Criminal'" by UPI

Sept. 26, 2012, ([http://www.military.com/daily-news/2012/09/26/nader-calls-obama-a-war-criminal.html?ESRC=dod\\_A.nl](http://www.military.com/daily-news/2012/09/26/nader-calls-obama-a-war-criminal.html?ESRC=dod_A.nl))

President Obama is a "war criminal" while rival Mitt Romney is "a corporation running for president," says Ralph Nader, a former candidate for U.S. president.

Nader, who ran for president as the Green Party candidate in 2000 and as an independent in 2004, told Politico that Obama was worse than George W. Bush.

Obama is "more aggressive, more illegal worldwide" than Bush, the six-time presidential candidate said. The president is a "war criminal," he said, who "thinks the world is his plate, that national sovereignties mean nothing, drones can go anywhere."

Obama's success has been "below average," Nader said, "because he raised expectation levels. What expectation level did George W. Bush raise?"

However, Nader said he liked some programs pushed by Obama, such as the president's focus on renewable energy and his thwarted jobs bill.

Nader said he preferred Obama over Romney, the Republican candidate, because Obama is "the more effective evil" who has "legitimized the lawless war-mongering and militarism abroad of George W. Bush."

Romney, Nader charged, is "basically a corporation running for president masquerading as a human being."

Nader, who twice ran for president under the Green Party banner, blasted the dominant parties. The Democratic Party is "sick" and "decaying," he said, while the Republican Party is "the cruelest, most ignorant, most anti-worker, most war-mongering, most Wall Street-indentured Republican Party in its history, since the 1850s."

Nader isn't running for president this year and hinted he may never run again.

20120930-09 23:59 SteveB Photo: *iQué magnificas!*

<http://feriasbolivia.blogspot.com/2011/09/fotos-magnificas-en-la-expocruz.html>



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

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Welcome to all our new members who may be here for the first time. We want to hear from YOU! To submit your comment, you can use the form on our website or blog, or reply to this email with your two cents worth. Be sure to sign with your desired user name.

Your email address will always be kept strictly confidential.

Feel free to forward this Newsletter to anyone you know on the Right or the Left, though your motives might be different in each case. Regardless, PASS IT ON! Help keep your friends and acquaintances informed and thinking.

<http://www.FriendsOfTheMiddle.org>  
[FriendsOfTheMiddle@hotmail.com](mailto:FriendsOfTheMiddle@hotmail.com)

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## FRIENDS OF THE MIDDLE NEWSLETTER #238 — OCT. 2, 2012

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

**INDEX: Click here.**

### **How the Cookie Crumbles**

(posted by Steven W. Baker / SteveB, Oct. 2, 2012)

News Flash: Progressive cookies beat conservative cookies!

"Michelle Obama Wins Cookie Contest" by Caitlin McDevitt, Politico

Oct. 1, 2012, (<http://www.politico.com/blogs/click/2012/10/michelle-obama-wins-cookie-contest-137162.html?hp=12>)



Sorry, Ann Romney. But the cookie has crumbled in favor of the first lady.

Michelle Obama has won *Family Circle's* 2012 Presidential Cookie Bake-Off, the magazine reports in its November issue.

Obama and Romney both submitted recipes to the contest, and – after more than 9,000 people weighed in – “just 287 votes separated the two women, our smallest margin ever,” *Family Circle* says.

Romney's M&M cookies got 48.5 percent of votes, while Obama's white and dark chocolate chip cookies won with 51.5 percent.

Ann Romney: <http://www.familycircle.com/recipes/desserts/cookies/presidential-cookie-recipes/#page=2>.

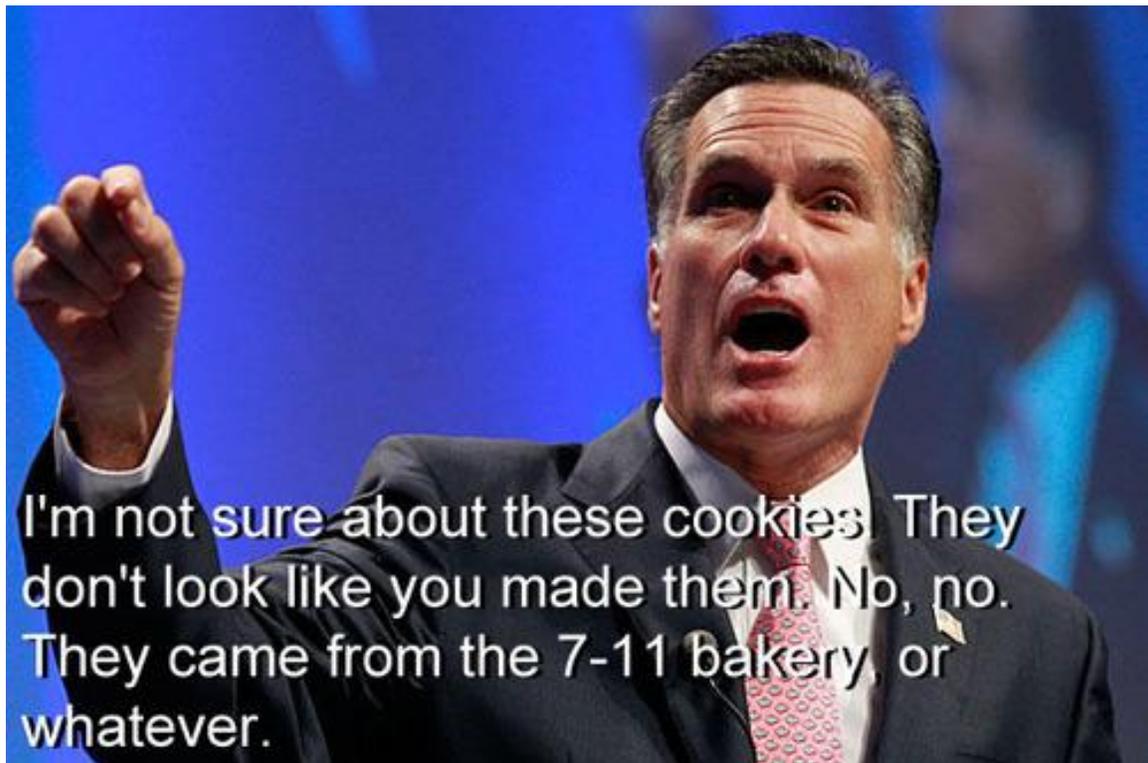
Michelle Obama: <http://www.familycircle.com/recipes/desserts/cookies/presidential-cookie-recipes/?ordersrc=rdfc1105320>.

*Family Circle* notes that the bake-off, which it's hosted since 1992, "has been a bell-weather in four out of five elections."

The exception? Obama lost to Cindy McCain four years ago, despite complaints that the Arizona senator's wife had cheated.

"Mitt Romney Would Rather Starve Than Touch That Mass-Produced Poor-Person Cookie" by Juli Weiner, *Vanity Fair*

Apr. 19, 2012, (<http://www.vanityfair.com/online/daily/2012/04/Mitt-Romney-Would-Rather-Starve-Than-Touch-That-Mass-Produced-Poor-Person-Cookie>)





Mitt Romney's mainframe continues to be unable to handle such basic functions like PANDER 3.0. Earlier this cycle, we watched as Romney was unable to answer a simple question about whether he enjoys NASCAR racing, while at a NASCAR race, and instead essentially changed the subject to the tremendous wealth of some of his friends. And as evidenced by Romney's appearance at a Pittsburgh-area picnic on Tuesday, his human technicians have yet to fix the bug.

At an outdoor roundtable with some Pennsylvania voters, Romney was offered lemonade and cookies. You can imagine what fresh public-relations havoc this offering wrought. "I'm not sure about these cookies," Romney said. "Did you make those cookies? You didn't, did you? No. No. They came from the local 7-Eleven bakery or wherever."

Soooooo grosssss. Ewwww. These cookies are, like, bought at a store where people can get gas right outside? That customers pump themselves? What are you, competing with the service class? Grosssss. Get this cookie away from me before it insists I claim it as a dependent.

That the cookies came from some "beloved local bakery," Bethel Bakery, is just the icing on the low-rent Entenmann's Coffee Cake. (According to The Hill, the bakery "is running a 'Cookie Gate special' on Thursday, giving away half a dozen cookies with the purchase of a dozen." The Democratic National Committee and 7-Eleven are also mock-offended, though not nearly as charmingly.)

Seriously, can someone get that cookie out of here? Before it demands a 529 college savings plan?

"Mitt Romney Insults Local Pittsburgh Bakery: 'I Don't Know About These Cookies'" by Sara Dover, International Business Times

Apr. 19, 2012, (<http://www.ibtimes.com/mitt-romney-insults-local-pittsburgh-bakery-i-dont-know-about-these-cookies-439426>)

All Bethel Bakery wanted was to welcome Republican presidential hopeful Mitt Romney to its Pennsylvania town with some locally-made cookies.

Instead, the gaffe-prone candidate inadvertently insulted the plate of baked goods that was presented to him at a campaign stop in Bethel Park on Wednesday, guessing it was from a convenience store.

"Fire Congress, Vote Out Incumbents" by Joel S. Hirschhorn, NationofChange

Oct. 1, 2012, (<http://www.nationofchange.org/fire-congress-vote-out-incumbents-1349101588>)

For politicians to do what is right, first citizens must do what is right.

Of all the many, many stupid things that most Americans do, nothing is more insane than the ritual every two years of reelecting incumbent members of Congress. Countless opinion polls find that the public has incredibly low levels of positive regard for Congress. Just one in 10 Americans approves of the job Congress is doing, according to a Gallup poll released a few weeks ago, tying the branch's lowest approval rating in 38 years.

Yet this year as in past years, unless Americans take back control of their country, voters will again reelect nearly all incumbents. Often, some incumbents do not even have any significant opposition. For example, in the 2000 election cycle, out of 435 House seats, 64 members had no major-party opponent, and in 2008 every House race in Arkansas was uncontested by a major party according to the Center for Voting and Democracy. Political redesign of congressional districts, gerrymandering, is widely done to ensure reelection of incumbents or one party.

The main way that incumbents get removed from office these days is when they lose in a party primary election, or die, or get themselves into a sex or corruption scandal. Primaries often replace the incumbent with someone else from the same party who will, in time, become an incumbent. That replacement is often a more extreme partisan than the previous incumbent.

The usual rationale for this survival of incumbents given by political analysts and writers is that although the public correctly sees Congress as a whole as incompetent, dysfunctional and incapable of serving critical public interests, they somehow think that their own Representatives and Senators are worth reelecting. This, of course, makes no sense. If this had validity, then cumulatively and nationally it would make sense to keep incumbents in office and Congress would get better and better with each election. In fact, Congress has become worse and worse with each election. This holds true in a genuine bipartisan sense, as nearly all incumbents, regardless of party, do not deserve to be reelected.

If Congress as a whole stinks, which it clearly does, then it is only logical to believe that this bleak condition must result from nearly all incumbents contributing to the mess. The exceptions are not defined by simply being the ones on your ballot.

How can a democracy function and have any deserved credibility when the electorate stubbornly refuses to act honestly and appropriately to get rid of the elected representatives who have proven themselves incapable of governing with competence and honor?

There must be better explanations.

Here is a likely one. Most Americans have become beholden to one of the two major political parties even if they are not officially members of them and may even consider themselves as uncommitted or independent. Moreover, a majority of people find themselves living in places where their favored party has predominated. When election time rolls around they cannot get themselves to vote for the candidate from the "other" party and they refuse to vote for third party candidates. Or they are so fed up with an awful government and political system that they do not vote at all, or not for congressional races.

Another contributing factor might be related to the lesser evil mode of thinking. The incumbent loser that you know is, somehow, thought to be better than the competing candidate you do not know, especially one from the "other" party. Reelecting incumbents is like some form of hallucinatory fantasy deemed the safer choice as if keeping them in office will magically turn out to be different and better than in previous times. They have seen the light, gotten the message, turned the corner, become what they once promised to be, and so on. Nuts. Congressional experience is not to be rewarded; it must be penalized for rotten performance.

Third, incumbents almost always have the most money because they have already been corrupted by money. More money means more advertising and more lies. Lies work. Especially for the many information-poor voters that are easily swayed by campaign propaganda. The big popular lie of omission these days is staying completely away from their congressional record. No incumbent wants to be seen as an experienced Washington insider. If you failed on the job, why would you?

In our country effective representative government is crucial. To keep reelecting congressional incumbents that nearly always deserve to be fired is unpatriotic, subversive and antithetical to the ideals of our constitutional republic.

This year ten Senators and 42 Representatives are not running for reelection. Odds are that far fewer incumbents will be voted out of office, if historic trends continue. For House elections from 1982 to 2008 only one in three voters did not vote for a winning House representative and 73 percent of House races were won by landslide margins of at least 20 percentage points. The power of incumbency reduces much needed political competition which a healthy democracy requires.

If the royalty of incumbency does not stop there is no hope whatsoever of putting the nation on a much better track. It does not matter who is elected president. In the end, if the fractured Congress we have witnessed for years perseveres the US is doomed to join the list of once great global powers that went down the toilet.

Flush congressional incumbents out. Now. Or be complicit in the death of American democracy. Stop making excuses, rationalizing. Throw incumbent turds out of office. Even more important than not voting for the challenger or incumbent from the "other" party is not voting for the incumbent of your party, even if it threatens party control of the House or Senate.

If you do not help fire Congress, then you deserve to suffer personally from what the federal government does or does not do. Make your voice really heard this year.

<a href="#">20121001-02</a>	14:27	Charis	Video: "Plaza 24 de Septiembre, Santa Cruz, Bolivia"
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Video: "Plaza 24 de Septiembre, Santa Cruz, Bolivia" by BoliviaBella

Oct. 1, 2012, (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fbnQh57ArXY&feature=youtu.be>)

Plaza 24 de Septiembre is Santa Cruz, Bolivia's central square around which the entire city has been built. On the Southern end is the Basilica de San Lorenzo, the ancient Catholic cathedral (you can climb the cathedral clock tower to overlook the city). Here you'll also find the Mayor's Office, City Council, and other government buildings, as well as a great many stores and souvenir shops, banks, and other centuries-old buildings. Inside the cathedral you can visit the Museum of Religious Art. Cine Palace, on the west side, is a great place to take in a movie.

For more: [www.boliviabella.com/plaza-24.html](http://www.boliviabella.com/plaza-24.html).

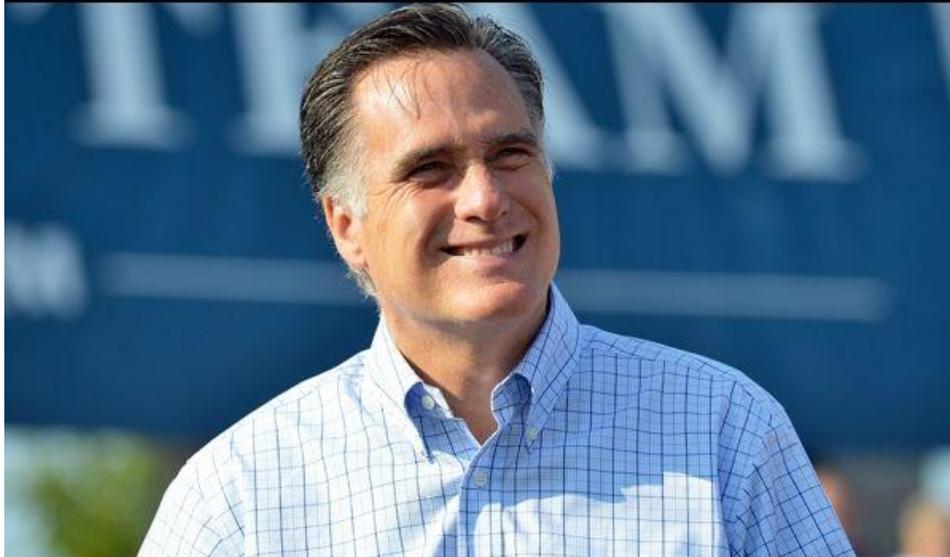
<a href="#">20121001-03</a>	14:46	SteveB	"The Federal Bailout That Saved Mitt Romney"
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"The Federal Bailout That Saved Mitt Romney" by Tim Dickinson, *Rolling Stone*

Aug. 29, 2012, (<http://www.rollingstone.com/politics/news/the-federal-bailout-that-saved-mitt-romney-20120829>)

(Government documents prove the candidate's mythology is just that.)

# ANOTHER ROMNEY LIE ROMNEY RAN BAIN BANKRUPT



**FOIA DOCS REVEAL ROMNEY GOT A SECRET  
\$30 MILLION BAILOUT TO SAVE BAIN  
TAXPAYERS SCREWED FOR \$10 MILLION - FATCATS GOT BONUSES**

Mitt Romney likes to say he won't "apologize" for his success in business. But what he never says is "thank you" – to the American people – for the federal bailout of Bain & Company that made so much of his outsize wealth possible.

According to the candidate's mythology, Romney took leave of his duties at the private equity firm Bain Capital in 1990 and rode in on a white horse to lead a swift restructuring of Bain & Company, preventing the collapse of the consulting firm where his career began. When *The Boston Globe* reported on the rescue at the time of his Senate run against Ted Kennedy, campaign aides spun Romney as the wizard behind a "long-shot miracle," bragging that he had "saved bank depositors all over the country \$30 million when he saved Bain & Company."

In fact, government documents on the bailout obtained by *Rolling Stone* show that the legend crafted by Romney is basically a lie. The federal records, obtained under the Freedom of Information Act, reveal that Romney's initial rescue attempt at Bain & Company was actually a disaster – leaving the firm so financially strapped that it had "no value as a going concern." Even worse, the federal bailout ultimately engineered by Romney screwed the FDIC – the bank insurance system backed by taxpayers – out of at least \$10 million. And in an added insult, Romney rewarded top executives at Bain with hefty bonuses at the very moment that he was demanding his handout from the feds.

With his selection of Paul Ryan as his running mate, Romney has made fiscal stewardship the centerpiece of his campaign. A banner at MittRomney.com declared, "We have a moral responsibility not to spend more than we take in." Romney also opposed the federal bailout for Detroit automakers, famously arguing that the industry should be forced into bankruptcy. Government bailouts, he insists, are "the wrong way to go."

But the FDIC documents on the Bain deal – which were heavily redacted by the firm prior to release – show that as a wealthy businessman, Romney was willing to go to extremes to secure a federal bailout to serve his own interests. He had a lot at stake, both financially and politically. Had Bain & Company collapsed, insiders say, it would have dealt a grave setback to Bain Capital, where Romney went on to build a personal fortune valued at as much as

\$250 million. It would also have short-circuited his political career before it began, tagging Romney as a failed businessman unable to rescue his own firm.

"None of us wanted to see Bain be the laughingstock of the business world," recalls a longtime Romney lieutenant who asked not to be identified. "But Mitt's reputation was on the line."

The trouble began in 1984, when Bain & Company spun off Bain Capital to engage in leveraged buyouts and put Romney in charge of the new operation. To free up money to invest in the new business, founder Bill Bain and his partners cashed out much of their stock in the consulting firm – leaving it saddled with about \$200 million in debt. (Romney, though not a founder, reportedly profited from the deal.) "People will tell you that Bill raped the place clean, was greedy, didn't know when to stop," a former Bain consultant later conceded. "Did they take too much out of the firm? You bet."

The FDIC documents make clear what happened next: "Soon after the founders sold their equity," analysts reported, "business began to drop off." First came scandal: In the late 1980s, a Bain consultant became a key figure in an illegal stock manipulation scheme in London. The firm's reputation took a hit, and it fired 10 percent of its consulting force. By the time the 1989 recession began, Bain & Company found itself going broke fast. Cash flows weren't enough to service the debt imposed by the founders, and the firm could barely make payroll. In a panic, Bill Bain tapped Romney, his longtime protégé, to take the reins.

In Romney's own retelling, he casts himself as a selfless and loyal company man. "There was no upside," he told his cheerleading biographer Hugh Hewitt in 2007. "There was no particular reason to do it other than a sense of obligation and duty to an organization that had done great things for me."

In fact, Romney had a direct stake in the survival of Bain & Company: He had been working to build the Bain brand his entire career, and felt he had to save the firm at all costs. After all, Bain sold top-dollar strategic advice to big businesses about how to protect themselves from going bust. If Bain & Company went bankrupt, recalls the Romney deputy, "anyone associated with them would have looked clownish." Indeed, when a banker from Goldman Sachs urged Bain to consider bankruptcy as the obvious solution to the firm's woes, Romney's desperation began to show. He flatly refused to discuss it – and in the ensuing argument, one witness says, Romney almost ended up in a brawl when the Goldman banker advised him to "go f\*ck yourself." For the sake of Romney's career and fortune, bankruptcy was simply not an option – no matter who got screwed in the process.

According to the government records obtained by *Rolling Stone*, Bain & Company "defaulted on its debt obligations" at nearly the same time that "W. Mitt Romney...stepped in as managing director (and later chief executive) in 1990 and led the financial restructuring intended to get the firm back on track."

Romney moved decisively, and his early efforts appeared promising. He persuaded the founders to return \$25 million of the cash they had raided from Bain & Company and forgive \$75 million in debt, in return for protection from most future liabilities. Romney then consolidated Bain's massive debts into a single, binding loan agreement with four banks, which received liens on Bain's assets and agreed to delay repayments on the firm's debts for two years. The federal government also signed off on the deal, since the FDIC had recently taken control of a bank that was owed \$30.6 million by Bain. Romney assured creditors that the restructuring would enable Bain to "operate normally, compensate its professionals competitively" and, ultimately, pay off its debts.

Almost as soon as the FDIC agreed to the loan restructuring, however, Romney's rescue plan began to fall apart. "The company realized early on that it would be unable to hit its revenue targets or manage the debt structure," the documents reveal. By the spring of 1992, Bain's decline was perilous: "If Bain goes into default," one analyst warned the FDIC, "the bank group will need to decide whether to force Bain into bankruptcy."

With his rescue plan a bust, Romney was forced to slink back to the banks to negotiate a new round of debt relief. There was only one catch: Even though Bain & Company was deep in debt and sinking fast, the firm was actually flush with cash – most of it from the looted money that Bill Bain and other partners had given back. "Liquidity is strong based on the significant cash balance which Bain is carrying," one federal document reads.

Under normal circumstances, such ample reserves would have made liquidating Bain an attractive option: Creditors could simply divvy up the stockpiled cash and be done with the troubled firm. But Bain had inserted a poison pill in its loan agreement with the banks: Instead of being required to use its cash to pay back the firm's creditors, the money could be pocketed by Bain executives in the form of fat bonuses – starting with VPs making \$200,000 and up. "The company can deplete its cash balances by making officer-bonus payments," the FDIC lamented, "and still be in compliance with the loan documents."

What's more, the bonus loophole gave Romney a perverse form of leverage: If the banks and the FDIC didn't give in to his demands and forgive much of Bain's debts, Romney would raid the firm's coffers, pushing it into the very bankruptcy that the loan agreement had been intended to avert. The losers in this game would not only be Bain's creditors – including the federal government – but the firm's nearly 1,000 employees worldwide.

In March 1992, according to the FDIC documents, Romney approached the banks and played the bonus card. Allow Bain to pay off its debt at a deep discount, he demanded – just 35 cents on the dollar. Otherwise, the "majority" of the firm's "excess cash" would "be available for the bonus pool to its officers at a vice president level and above."

The next month, when the banks balked at the deal, Romney decided to prove he wasn't bluffing. "As the bank group did not accept the proposal from Bain," the records show, "Bain's senior management has decided to go forth with the distribution of bonuses." (Bain's lawyers redacted the amount of the executive payouts, and the Romney campaign refused to comment on whether Romney himself received a bonus.)

Romney's decision to place executive compensation over fiscal responsibility immediately put Bain on the ropes. By that July, FDIC analysts reported, Bain had so little money left that "the company will actually run out of cash and default on the existing debt structure" as early as 1995. If that happened, Bain employees and American consumers would take the hit – an alternative that analysts considered "catastrophic."

But Romney didn't dole out all of Bain's cash as bonuses right away. According to a record from May 1992, he set aside some of the money to put one last squeeze on the firm's creditors. Romney now demanded that the banks and the government agree to a deal that was even less favorable than the last – to retire Bain's debts "at a price up to but not exceeding 30 cents on the dollar."

The FDIC considered finding a buyer to take over its loans to Bain, but analysts concluded that "Bain has no value as a going concern." And the government wasn't likely to get much out of Bain if it allowed the firm to go bankrupt: The loan agreement engineered by Romney had left the FDIC "virtually unsecured" on the \$30.6 million it was owed by Bain. "Once bonuses are paid," the analysts warned, "all members of the bank group believe this company will dissolve during 1993."

About the only assets left would be Bain's office equipment. The records show FDIC analysts pathetically attempting to assess the value of such items, including an HP LaserJet printer, before concluding that most of the gear was so old that the government's "portion of any liquidation proceeds would be negligible."

How had Romney scored such a favorable deal at the FDIC's expense? It didn't hurt that he had close ties to the agency – the kind of "crony capitalism" he now decries. A month before he closed the 1991 loan agreement, Romney promoted a former FDIC bank examiner to become a senior executive at Bain. He also had pull at the top: FDIC chairman Bill Seidman, who had served as finance chair for Romney's father when he ran for president in 1968.

The federal documents also reveal that, contrary to Romney's claim that he returned full time to Bain Capital in 1992, he remained involved in bailout negotiations to the very end. In a letter dated March 23rd, 1993, Romney reassured creditors that his latest scheme would return Bain & Company to "long-term financial stability." That same month, Romney once again threatened to "pay out maximum bonus distributions" to top executives unless much of Bain's debt was erased.

In the end, the government surrendered. At the time, *The Boston Globe* cited bankers dismissing the bailout as "relatively routine" – but the federal documents reveal it was anything but. The FDIC agreed to accept nearly \$5

million in cash to retire \$15 million in Bain's debt – an immediate government bailout of \$10 million. All told, the FDIC estimated it would recoup just \$14 million of the \$30 million that Romney's firm owed the government.

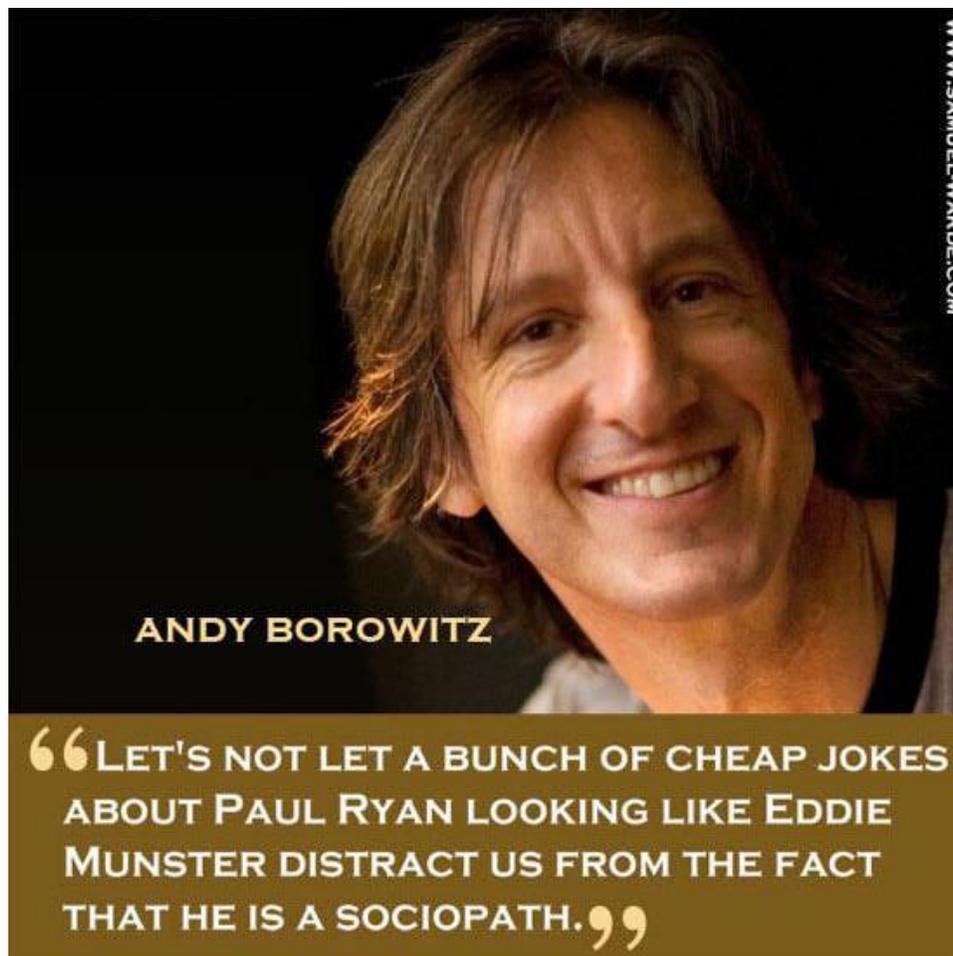
It was a raw deal – but Romney's threat to loot his own firm had left the government with no other choice. If the FDIC had pushed Bain into bankruptcy, the records reveal, the agency would have recouped just \$3.56 million from the firm.

The Romney campaign refused to respond to questions for this article; a spokeswoman said only that "Mitt Romney turned around Bain & Company by getting all parties to come to the table and make difficult decisions." But while taxpayers did not finance the bailout, the debt forgiven by the government was booked as a loss to the FDIC – and then recouped through higher insurance premiums from banks. And banks, of course, are notorious for finding ways to pass their costs along to customers, usually in the form of higher fees. Thanks to the nature of the market, in other words, the bailout negotiated by Romney ultimately wound up being paid by the American people.

Even as consumers took a loss, however, a small group of investors wound up getting a good deal in the bailout. Bain Capital – the very firm that had triggered the crisis in the first place – walked away with \$4 million. That was the fee it charged Bain & Company for loaning the consulting firm the services of its chief executive – one Willard Mitt Romney.

(This story is from the Sept. 13, 2012 issue of *Rolling Stone*.)

[20121001-04](#) 17:35 SteveB Quote: Andy Borowitz on Paul Ryan



"The Blowout Scenario Following a Possible Obama Landslide" by Michael Tomasky, *The Daily Beast*

Oct 1, 2012, (<http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2012/10/01/the-blowout-scenario-following-a-possible-obama-landslide.html?obref=obinsite>)

(Heading into the debates, an Obama victory on Election Day is looking likely. But what if he doesn't just win, but wins huge? Michael Tomasky on the consequences of a landslide.)

Personally, I still think it will be fairly close. And—warning; "to be sure" sentence coming!—to be sure, Mitt Romney could still win. But let's have some fun. Let's spend one column imagining that this thing is a blowout. A massacre, as Arlo Guthrie put it; an Agincourt, a replay of those boring '80s Super Bowls, a Jordin Sparks versus Sanjaya Mulakar kind of situation. What would happen? After we finish laughing malevolently and gloating sometime in December, would it change things in the actual world? You bet it would. I can see four changes, and they'd all be pretty great.

Before we get to that, let's define our delicious terms here. Obviously, Obama isn't capable of a blowout along 1972 or 1984 lines, when the losers carried just one state each plus the District of Columbia. It can't be like 1988, when Mike Dukakis won nine states and DC. Romney will win a lot of states. But let's say Obama wins all the blues and takes every swing state. That's 347 electoral votes. And it's not at all implausible.

But what I'm talking about here is one further and devastating twist of the knife. Let's say here that Romney really collapses, and Obama picks off one state no one expected: Missouri, because Todd Akin became such an embarrassment, or Arizona—both states where Obama is now about seven points behind. The same is true, interestingly, in Georgia and Tennessee. But let's say Arizona. All those old people somehow rise up against Paul Ryan. That's 358.

If anyone had said back in January that Obama would end up with tallies like these, people would have called Bellevue on him. So if something like this were to happen on election night, it would be staggering. Remember—according to the "it's all about the economy" caucus, Obama was supposed to lose this election! So what would be the result of this blowout?

First, a marvelously amusing recriminations war among Republicans and conservatives about what happened, and it will result in the conservative movement marginalizing itself from mainstream America even further. It will start with arguments over political strategy. Romney was a squish. Romney ran too far right. Ryan was a bad choice. Ryan was a great choice but he wasn't allowed to be Ryan. We should have gone with Santorum. We should have gone with Newt. Even Herman Cain would have done better (someone will say it!).

The more entertaining part of this feud will not be tactical but philosophical, and already I feel great joy in anticipation of the certainty that they'll reach exactly the wrong conclusion. That is, Romney will have lost, if he loses, because the extreme right wing led him around by the nose and ruined him with swing voters, but those same people who charted his demise will argue that he wasn't a true conservative. And within conservative ranks, they'll win!

Okay, that's largely a battle of operatives and pundits. Meanwhile, the pols themselves will have a different argument, which brings us to our second effect: the Republicans in Congress would almost surely have to become less obstinate. Yes, there will be intense pressure from the Tea Party wing to draw an even firmer line against Obama. But I suspect there will be more pressure in the other direction, especially on senators, who represent whole states. Your average American is going to think: "Okay, come on, guys, you went hard at him for four years, gave him your best shot, he kicked your asses in a royal way, now grow up."

We already saw, in one recent *Washington Post* story that some Hill Republicans are preparing themselves now for coming to terms with the idea of giving in to Obama on upper-income tax increases. A huge victory will ratchet up such pressure.

So let's say that's impact number three: Obama gets his grand bargain before Jan. 1. He gets his tax increase, meaning that some Republicans vote to raise a tax for the first time in 20 years. What he gives in return for that is a serious question. Some concessions on defense spending and probably on Medicare. What exactly they are we'll see. Liberals might be unhappy, but in the mainstream, Obama will be praised to the heavens. He really will have changed the tone in Washington. And he'll have done it by crushing the other side into submission so that it had no real choice.

Your average American will think: 'Okay, come on, guys, you went hard at him for four years, gave him your best shot, and he kicked your asses in a royal way. Now grow up.'

And fourth and finally, if all this happens, the political balance of the country changes. We'll still be bitterly divided, because the people responsible for sowing most of the division will never shut up. But it won't be a 50-50 country anymore. It'll be a 54-46 country. That's a country with a clear majority. Built by Obama. Don't you love that? While the wingnuts spend the next four years looking for that Kenyan birth certificate, Obama can solidify implementation of the Affordable Care Act, notch a foreign-policy accomplishment or two, and preside over a rebounding economy, and some day my great-grandchild can go see this (conservatives: don't click, really, you'll be sick):

<http://www.sodahead.com/fun/you-know-there-are-some-things-that-you-just-never-think-oflike-mt-rushmore-from-the-ca/question-2125819/?page=2&link=ibaf&q=&imgurl=http://t-shirtguru.com/product-images/mt-rushmore-obama-t-shirt-choiceshirts-1.jpg>.

I don't really think this election will be a blowout. But I see little reason to think that's any less possible than a Romney win. Indeed, everything we've seen from the Romney campaign suggests it will comport itself these last five and a half weeks exactly as it has up to this point, which is to say, incompetently. And while my fourth change, I confess, is a tad wishful, the first three are completely in the realm of the possible, even if Obama wins more narrowly than I've laid out above. But of course, counting chickens and all that. So after filing this column, I'm not going to spend any more time pondering the consequences of a blowout. But conservatives had better.

<http://www.duneland.com/aer/indiana-dunes/indiana-dunes-state-park.html>



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

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## **FRIENDS OF THE MIDDLE** **NEWSLETTER #239 — OCT. 3, 2012**

*Welcome to always lively political discussion and whatever else comes up.*  
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**INDEX: Click here.**

### **Getting Elected Is Only Half the Battle**

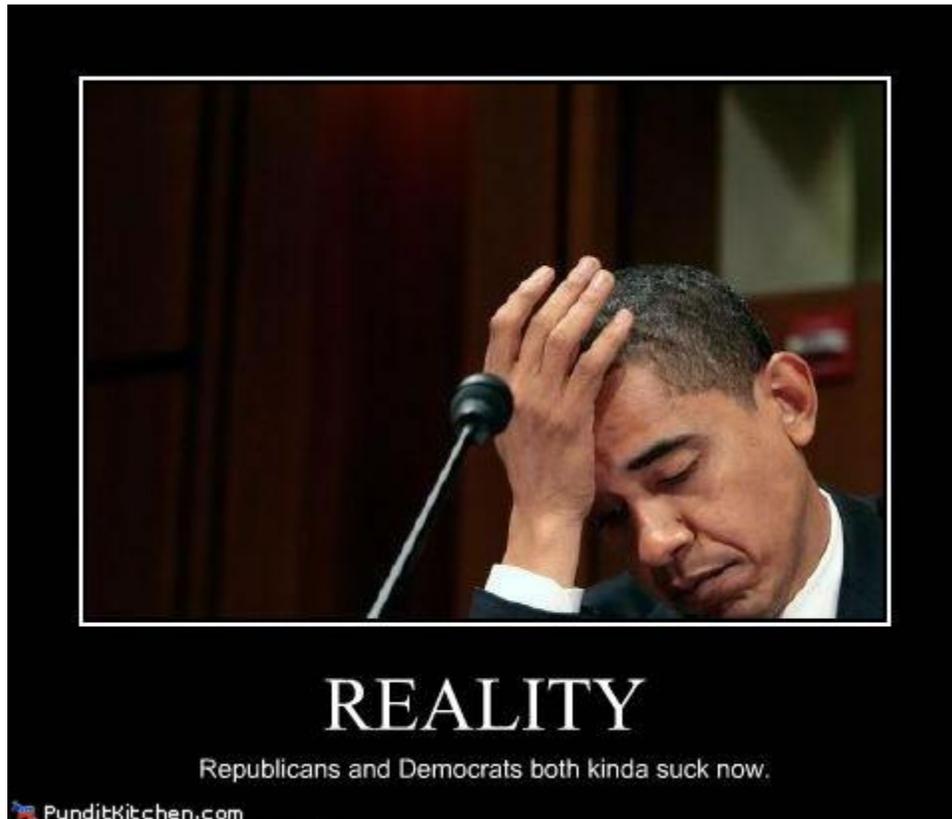
(posted by Steven W. Baker / SteveB, Oct. 3, 2012)

Even after R0mney and the Republicans are crushed...

"Why Democrats Still Suck" by Sally Kohn, Salon

Oct. 2, 2012, ([http://www.salon.com/2012/10/02/why\\_democrats\\_still\\_suck/](http://www.salon.com/2012/10/02/why_democrats_still_suck/))

(They remain the party committed to getting in office and then not doing anything powerful.)



To borrow the old adage, with Democrats like Jerry Brown, who needs Republicans?

After all, the former mayor of the so-called People's Republic of Oakland and now-repeat governor of California, was called "more of a fiscal conservative than Governor Reagan" by *American Conservative* magazine and pilloried in a Dead Kennedy's song as a "hippie-fascist." And now Gov. Brown has vetoed the Domestic Worker Bill of Rights, which would grant basic labor and wage protections to 200,000 nannies, housekeepers and home-health aides in the state.

Across the country, though voters are increasingly divided into increasingly fervent red-versus-blue camps, many Democratic leaders and candidates are little better than Brown. Take Sen. Joe Manchin, D-W.Va., who, when he ran for his seat in 2010, cut a TV commercial where he fired a rifle through his party's signature environmental legislation. Or Sen. Claire McCaskill, D-Mo., who was the only Democrat in 2011 to vote against a spending bill to keep the government operating until the following fall.

And it was a Democratic mayor in Chicago that tried to crush the teachers' union and push a privatization agenda on public education, and a Democratic governor in New York who gutted public-sector employee pensions.

In other words, while Republicans are stiffening their collective spine and achieving greater (albeit increasingly extreme) ideological cohesion, Democrats remain the party committed to getting in office and not really doing anything powerful once there.

Of course, this is a big part of the reason why progressive voters are frustrated with President Obama. He passed landmark healthcare reform legislation, but his plan relied on strengthening private insurance companies instead of creating a competing, public option. Obama passed a stimulus bill to reenergize the economy, but it was small compared to the scale of need — and most of the spending was on tax cuts, not job creation and public works.

And we can expect, at this week's first presidential debate, focused on domestic policy, that President Obama will be tripping over himself trying to seem more of an anti-deficit hawk than his Republican opponent.

The reality is that, whether it's because we're chronically pessimistic or used to being marginalized or uncomfortable losing in the short term to win down the road, the Democratic rank-and-file continue to let our party stray toward the center. While the Tea Party has exacted revenge even against any Republican who dares work in a bipartisan fashion on mainstream legislation, Democrats can barely get their candidates to stop bashing their own party in public let alone vote in support of a liberal agenda. Yet conservative Republicans have been willing to elect extremist nut jobs in primaries who have no chance of winning in the general election (see, for example, Christine O'Donnell, Sharron Angle, Todd Akin) because they're willing to play the long game. And watching the Republican mainstream move steadily to the right on everything from shutting down the federal government to shutting down Planned Parenthood and, well, shutting down everything in between, the success of that patient but principled strategy is evident.

Earlier this year, two centrist Democratic members of the House of Representatives were defeated by more liberal candidates in Pennsylvania primaries, because the incumbents — Jason Altmire and Tim Holden — had opposed healthcare reform and climate change legislation. And the new, more liberal candidates seem likely to pull off victories (if Pennsylvania's new voter disenfranchisement laws don't stop them). And in Massachusetts, the innovative Progressive Campaign Change Committee effectively drafted Elizabeth Warren to run for the Senate and has been backing her very strong and very progressive campaign. So being both principled and victorious as Democrats is possible. It's just not that common.

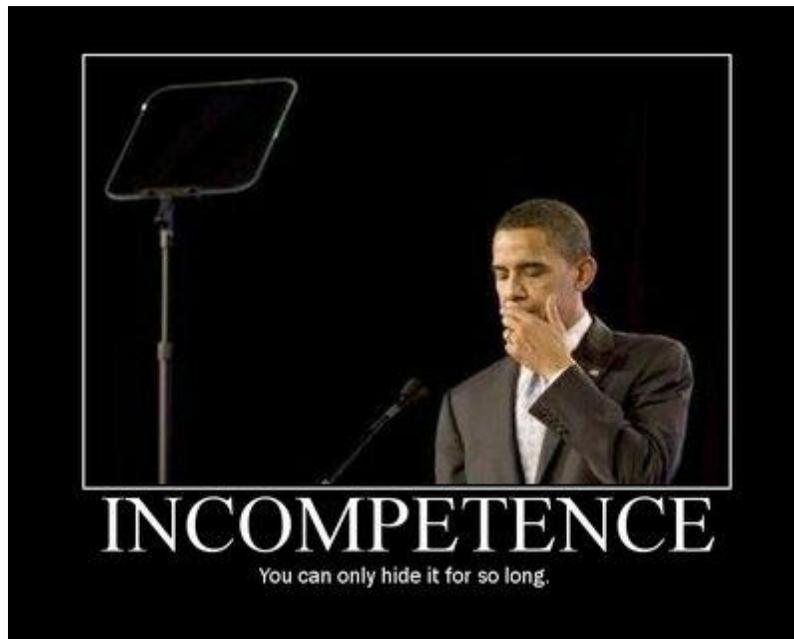
While the conservative base's barking against Mitt Romney is so loud you could strap them on the top of a car and still hear the yelling, progressive irritation with President Obama and the likes of McCaskill, Manchin, Brown and many others is often repressed until after the election. Too much is at stake, we reason. We can't risk helping elect Republicans. Which is, of course, always true — and therefore always wielded like a threat above our heads, keeping us compliant. I'm not saying there's anything structural we can do at this point about this election, so let's all get out there and put on our blue shirts and hats and knock on doors and cheer for the Democrats. But on Nov. 7, progressives should do some soul searching about why we don't command respect from the Democratic Party — and how we're going to change that.

You can also look at the re-elected state and local officials. People think only the presidency is relevant enough for their voter attention--and you can guess why, \$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$. The name recognition of the incumbents puts them "out there" to the unknown/often drafted, I presume, challenger who has no money from the higher ups to challenge. Murdock, in Indiana, is an example of how a block vote got him a state job which then got him "tapped" to run for the US Senate. When our majority is "R," blind voting for the ones below governor is rampant. Rarely do we hear a peep from anyone else on the ballot--maybe attorney general when there has been controversy. State treasurer-"Is there one?" most would say. My students were probably among the VERY few who had to learn about state-level and county-level politics! Nothing Murdock did truly got his name before the voters until they faced the ballot. Mitch Daniels worked hard at name recognition when he returned to IN, and I will give him that it was clever. He came on as the "good old boy on a Harley" while now Pence has the verbal ability of a talk show host and looks of charm and dignity. Strangely, he is not saying much about what he will do on the Far Right as an agenda, and no one seems to be asking. Writing off the "D" challenger who has no \$\$\$\$\$\$ to charm...voters seem oblivious. Right now the hype is about football! I always taught the kids that the President of the United States does NOT CARE about the conditions of your roads or local hospital. He has BIG fish...but you live every day with local consequences. Pay is low, fame non-existent, and expertise too often lacking. It's either a second career or a starter job. No one notices the work until a till is entered and that makes headlines. Everyone wants the service to be good, but no one wants to do the labor.

I am thinking/HOPING that the Indiana record of splitting a ticket will prevent Murdock from winning. Gregg doesn't seem to have a chance against Pence, one of the thugs of the Right in the House. Never mind policy differences...WHERE is voter passion???????????????? It's lost in the latest electronics, kids' sports, gimmicks and STUFF. Most voters would, tragically, be flabbergasted to see things away from their own little worlds, let alone live "that" way. Witness Mittens. Underlying it all, I see a disinterest in fixing anything related to government. People don't study issues, just go for a sound bite/lie/ad...and I am back to preaching about the need for EDUCATION of the voters. States finagle over photo ID's to vote, but say nothing about knowledge for wise decisions....hmmmm....a little sarcasm to end the rant!

"Republicans Finally Admit Silliness of Obama TelePrompTer Caricature" by Chris Weigant, Huffington Post

Oct. 1, 2012, ([http://www.huffingtonpost.com/chris-weigant/republicans-finally-admit\\_b\\_1930814.html?utm\\_hp\\_ref=politics](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/chris-weigant/republicans-finally-admit_b_1930814.html?utm_hp_ref=politics))



You'll have to forgive the pundit world of late. Political wonks are all in a collective breath-holding moment, as we all sit nervously awaiting the first presidential debate of the season. We tell each other that it's going to be a big event -- possibly the biggest -- in the race for the White House, whether we actually believe this to be true or not. But because we're all waiting for the main event, there is actually time to sit back and examine how Republicans are proving that one of their own put-downs of President Obama was laughable nonsense from the very get-go. I speak (without notes, to be snarky) of "TelePrompTer Obama" -- the caricature that stated that Barack Obama was nothing more than a good speech-giver, and absolutely could not function speaking in public without the crutch of a prepared speech scrolling past his eyes.

This caricature began approximately the day Obama took office, and has been used scathingly by Republicans over the past four years. Obama was nothing more than a puppet, Republicans sneered, tied by the strings of his TelePrompTer, and unable to form a coherent thought or sentence on his own.

This was all ridiculous nonsense, of course, but that didn't stop the Republican Party from having a field day with it. Politicians have been using these devices since the time they were invented -- yes, even Republican politicians such as (say it softly) Ronald Wilson Reagan. The whole slur made about as much sense in the modern world as denouncing a politician for speaking into a microphone. TelePrompTers are hardly "new-fangled" devices, to put it another way. They've been around and been used for decades (although, as we've noted before, the media still has a major problem with the odd capitalization in the brand name, much the same way they got confused over "Etch A Sketch" and "Chick-fil-A" of late... but I digress).

Republicans had all kinds of fun building their caricature of President Obama as somehow lost without his TelePrompTer crutch, for years. Until this past weekend. Watching the Sunday political chatfests on television meant listening to Republican after Republican extol to the skies President Obama's ability as a standalone debater. Obama was masterful, Obama was best talking off-the-cuff, Obama was one of the greatest political speakers of our time. This was coming from Republicans, mind you.

It's all part of a game, of course, which both sides play. The name of this game is "Lower the Media's Expectations." Surrogates flood the airwaves right before a big debate talking up their opponent's debating abilities. This sets the

bar very high for the opponent, and sets it as low as possible for your guy or gal. Here is Mitt Romney's running mate, Paul Ryan, playing this game on Fox News Sunday yesterday:

"Look, President Obama is a very -- he's a very gifted speaker. The man's been on the national stage for many years. He's an experienced debater. He's done these kinds of debates before. This is Mitt's first time on this kind of a stage."

But by doing so, Ryan exposes not only his own doublethink on the issue, but the Republican Party's larger idiocy in perpetuating this "empty chair" caricature of President Obama's speaking abilities. Paul Ryan's own hypocrisy is easy to see, since he regularly cracks TelePrompter jokes out on the campaign trail. The punchline of the joke remains the same: Obama is so pathetic that he needs a TelePrompter, but Ryan is so gosh-darned manly that he is able to speak without one. What gives the lie to this hogwash is that not only Mitt Romney, but also virtually every Republican who spoke at the party's recent national convention used this supposed tool of the Devil. Somehow America is expected to believe that TelePrompters are laughable and proof of ignorance only when used by Democrats (and by one Democrat in particular). The most amusing irony appears when some hapless Republican cracks an Obama TelePrompter joke while themselves reading from the device which they are mocking.

It would have been nice if any of the Sunday show moderators (who always style themselves "journalists," often with very little to back this assertion up) had pounced this weekend on the Republicans' doublethink. By pumping up Obama's debating skills as high as they could get away with, Republicans were, in essence, admitting that the whole TelePrompter slam was, at heart, not only wrong but downright silly. So why was the "irony radar" of these well-paid and well-coiffed "journalists" seemingly broken? This was an entirely predictable event, since surrogates always play the expectations game right before a big debate. It wasn't too hard to see this coming.

To put this another way, I would have paid good money to see someone ask: "How can you sit here and tell me Obama is a great debater, when you've been mocking him for four years as a man who is incapable of speaking without a TelePrompter? **Were you lying to us then, or are you lying to us now?**"



"We have a level 4 Mop Situation, West Wing. Henshaw is screwing with the President's urninal-prompter again."



President Obama reads a prepared statement to members of the press corps inside an elementary school in Falls Church, Virginia\*

\*Tommy Christopher hardest hit

[20121002-02](#) 05:41 SteveB "My Take: 'I'm Spiritual but Not Religious' Is a Cop-Out"

"My Take: 'I'm Spiritual but Not Religious' Is a Cop-Out" by Alan Miller, CNN

Sept. 29, 2012, (<http://religion.blogs.cnn.com/2012/09/29/my-take-im-spiritual-not-religious-is-a-cop-out/?iref=obinsite>)

(Editor's note: Alan Miller is Director of The New York Salon and Co-Founder of London's Old Truman Brewery. He is speaking at The Battle of Ideas at London's Barbican in October.)

The increasingly common refrain that "I'm spiritual, but not religious," represents some of the most retrogressive aspects of contemporary society. The spiritual but not religious "movement" - an inappropriate term as that would suggest some collective, organizational aspect - highlights the implosion of belief that has struck at the heart of Western society.

Spiritual but not religious people are especially prevalent in the younger population in the United States, although a recent study has argued that it is not so much that people have stopped believing in God, but rather have drifted from formal institutions.

It seems that just being a part of a religious institution is nowadays associated negatively, with everything from the Religious Right to child abuse, back to the Crusades and of course with terrorism today.

Those in the spiritual-but-not-religious camp are peddling the notion that by being independent - by choosing an "individual relationship" to some concept of "higher power", energy, oneness or something-or-other - they are in a deeper, more profound relationship than one that is coerced via a large institution like a church.

That attitude fits with the message we are receiving more and more that "feeling" something somehow is more pure and perhaps, more "true" than having to fit in with the doctrine, practices, rules and observations of a formal institution that are handed down to us.

The trouble is that "spiritual but not religious" offers no positive exposition or understanding or explanation of a body of belief or set of principles of any kind.

What is it, this "spiritual" identity as such? What is practiced? What is believed?

The accusation is often leveled that such questions betray a rigidity of outlook, all a tad doctrinaire and rather old-fashioned.

But when the contemporary fashion is for an abundance of relativist "truths" and what appears to be in the ascendancy is how one "feels" and even governments aim to have a "happiness agenda," desperate to fill a gap at the heart of civic society, then being old-fashioned may not be such a terrible accusation.

It is within the context of today's anti-big, anti-discipline, anti-challenging climate - in combination with a therapeutic turn in which everything can be resolved through addressing my inner existential being - that the spiritual but not religious outlook has flourished.

The boom in megachurches merely reflects this sidelining of serious religious study for networking, drop-in centers and positive feelings.

Those that identify themselves, in our multi-cultural, hyphenated-American world often go for a smorgasbord of pick-and-mix choices.

A bit of Yoga here, a Zen idea there, a quote from Taoism and a Kabbalah class, a bit of Sufism and maybe some Feng shui, but not generally a reading and appreciation of the *Bhagavad Gita*, the *Karma Sutra* or the Qur'an, let alone The Old or New Testament.

So what, one may ask?

Christianity has been interwoven and seminal in Western history and culture. As Harold Bloom pointed out in his book on the King James Bible, everything from the visual arts, to Bach and our canon of literature generally would not be possible without this enormously important work.

Indeed, it was through the desire to know and read the Bible that reading became a reality for the masses - an entirely radical moment that had enormous consequences for humanity.

Moreover, the spiritual but not religious reflect the "me" generation of self-obsessed, truth-is-whatever-you-feel-it-to-be thinking, where big, historic, demanding institutions that have expectations about behavior, attitudes and observance and rules are jettisoned yet nothing positive is put in replacement.

The idea of sin has always been accompanied by the sense of what one could do to improve oneself and impact the world.

Yet the spiritual-but-not-religious outlook sees the human as one that simply wants to experience "nice things" and "feel better." There is little of transformation here and nothing that points to any kind of project that can inspire or transform us.

At the heart of the spiritual but not religious attitude is an unwillingness to take a real position. Influenced by the contribution of modern science, there is a reluctance to advocate a literalist translation of the world.

But these people will not abandon their affiliation to the sense that there is "something out there," so they do not go along with a rationalist and materialistic explanation of the world, in which humans are responsible to themselves and one another for their actions - and for the future.

There is a world of fence-sitting, not-knowingness, but not-trying-ness either. Take a stand, I say. Which one is it? A belief in God and Scripture or a commitment to the Enlightenment ideal of human-based knowledge, reason and action? Being spiritual but not religious avoids having to think too hard about having to decide.

from Guns & Patriots:

When someone asks you Nov. 7: "How could Romney lose?" What will you say?

I will say that W. Mitt Romney tried to win without conservatives, in particular without the support of pro-lifers, members of the Tea Party and finally, supporters of restoring gun rights.

As President Barack Obama in speeches sets the table for "responsible gun ownership" in his second term, the gun control crowd is fired up. Naturally, gun owners and supporters of restoring gun rights wait for Romney to stand up as their leader against the gun grabbers.

The Romney campaign walked away from Michigan and Pennsylvania in August without the slightest effort to energize the gun owners. Don't they vote? Don't they vote in huge numbers in both states?

Supporters of restoring gun rights vote in huge numbers in Michigan, Pennsylvania--and they can deliver Virginia, Ohio, Florida, three states Romney is willing to lose if it means asking for help from fellow Americans that he and his staff view as nut jobs.

Yes, they do. But, the Romney campaign seems to be playing another game. Yes, they want the White House, but they don't want to share it with regular people the Republican Party relies on to hold signs, make phone calls and give folks a ride to the polls.

—Neil W. McCabe, Editor, *Guns & Patriots*

[20121002-05](#)

11:00

SteveB

"Unresolved Fiscal Cliff Could Raise Taxes for 90 Percent of U.S. Families" & "Fiscal Cliff Countdown"

"Unresolved Fiscal Cliff Could Raise Taxes for 90 Percent of U.S. Families" (w/ video) by Wyatt Andrews, CBS News

Oct. 1, 2012, ([http://www.cbsnews.com/8301-18563\\_162-57524033/unresolved-fiscal-cliff-could-raise-taxes-for-90-percent-of-u.s-families/](http://www.cbsnews.com/8301-18563_162-57524033/unresolved-fiscal-cliff-could-raise-taxes-for-90-percent-of-u.s-families/))

Monday marks the first day of the federal government's new fiscal year, but there is not much to celebrate because we are headed toward what's being called a fiscal cliff.

There were dire new warnings Monday about what will happen to American families unless Congress and the president reach a budget deal by December 31. That is the day that several tax cuts will expire, and big cuts in federal spending will take hold.

Tax experts said 90 percent of American families are facing what they will call "unprecedented tax increases."

According to the non-partisan Tax Policy Center, the U.S. is on the threshold of one of the largest tax increases in history, a tax hike that could average \$3,500 for every American household.

Without actions from Congress, the report says taxes will go up next year by 20 percent, or \$536 billion overall. It will hit Americans at every income level including those living below the poverty line. For a middle income family making \$40,000 per year, the tax increase is \$2,000.

The increases are so large because the nation's biggest tax cuts all expire three months from now on New Year's Day. They include the Bush-era federal income tax cuts, the payroll tax cut that lowered Social Security and Medicare taxes, and several remaining stimulus tax cuts. They all go away January 1 unless Congress and the president reach a deal on the budget.

Many economists are concerned that a tax increase of that size will shock the economy and trigger a recession by reducing the cash taxpayers have to spend. But now, Congress and the president have a firm price tag on what it costs if they don't reach a budget deal after the election.

"Fiscal Cliff Countdown" by U.S. Chamber of Commerce, ([http://www.friendsoftheuschamber.com/fiscal-cliff?utm\\_source=friends&utm\\_medium=daily\\_news&utm\\_campaign=fiscal-cliff](http://www.friendsoftheuschamber.com/fiscal-cliff?utm_source=friends&utm_medium=daily_news&utm_campaign=fiscal-cliff))

20121002-06	14:32	Ben	Photo: Today's Seafood Lunch at Apple
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Yummy again! Surprise!

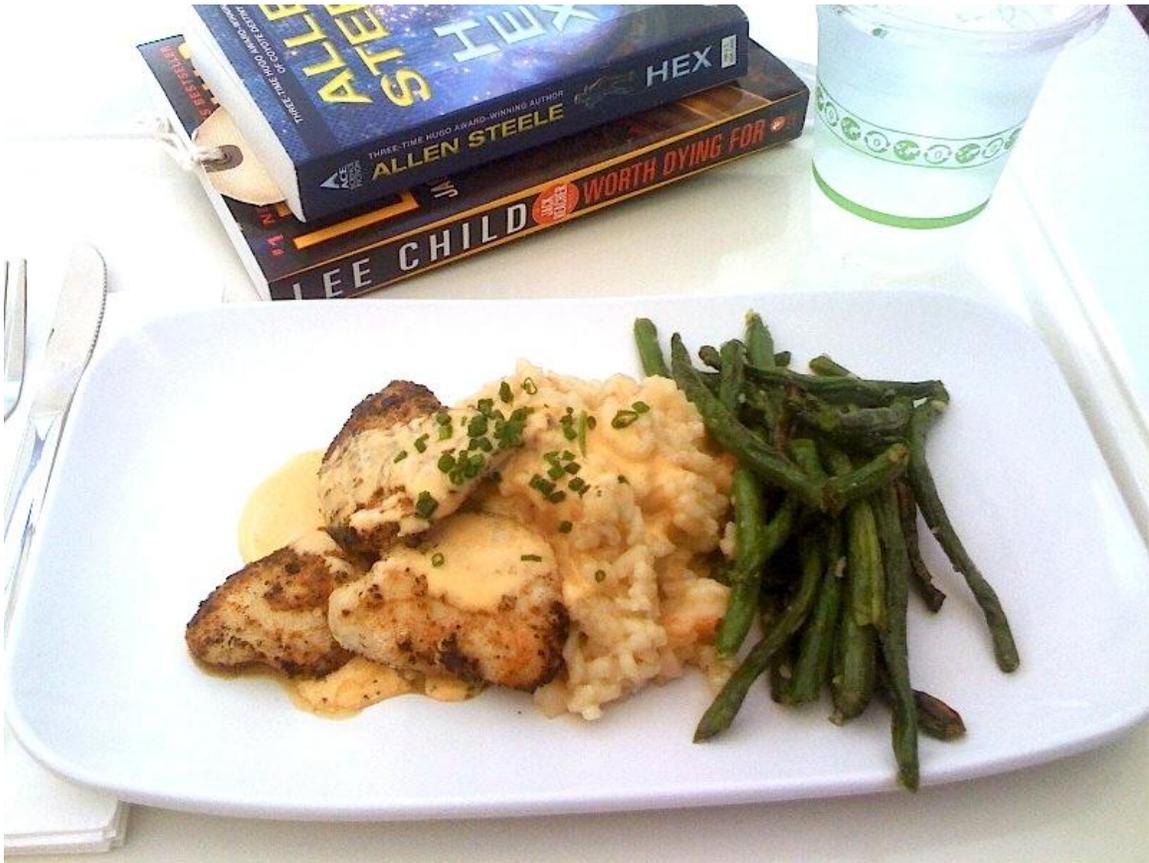
Today's delectable and delightful entrée is a naturally scarce commodity: grouper cheeks. After all, each grouper has only two, and the rest of the fish is most of the fish. So, scarce. Three cheeks comprise a serving; while not huge, they're bigger than they may appear.

In sushi circles, and in much of the world once you get away from North America, fish cheek meat is highly prized. I've had hamachi and tuna cheek, and at least one other kind, but those memories are not recent, so I won't attempt to compare. These tasty triangular tidbits are shaped like tricorn pillows, markedly thicker in the middle bulge, tapering spindle-wise to three rounded tips. The meat is a bit more rich in flavor than grouper body flesh, most but quite firm and quite white. As befits one of the muscles that must be in constant use for the animal to survive, it's resilient, a little springy, and stranded rather than flaky, yet with a grain that forks easily in one direction. Blackened with Cajun seasonings, these delicious line-caught wild Atlantic Ocean fish morsels were a dish you won't see offered just anywhere.

Complementing this fine fare were sauteed green beans, and a show-stealing and sumptuous Parmesan shrimp risotto. This risotto was the real deal, with butter, cream and sharp Parmesan cheese in perfect proportions; the pasta niblets seem to have absorbed their final moisture from the sauce, thickening it so that the dish was cohesive, the pasta al dente, flavored through with pungent cheese and the rich fullness of cream. Generous chunks of big fresh Texas Gulf shrimp, perfectly lightly cooked, made this salad savory -and- luxurious.

It is my understanding that both this and the cheeks were whipped up by the Bistro's new chef, whom I believe to be Kelly. I will need to learn how she spells it.

I look forward to eating more of Kelly's fine work.



Blackened Grouper Cheeks with Parmesa, Shrimp Salad, and Sautéed Green Beans

<http://sweetpollyfood.blogspot.com/2012/09/frenchys-original-cafe-clearwater-beach.html>



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

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## **FRIENDS OF THE MIDDLE** **NEWSLETTER #240 — OCT. 4, 2012**

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

**INDEX: Click here.**

### **A Sad Night in Denver**

(posted by Steven W. Baker / SteveB, Oct. 4, 2012)

It was certainly not a good night for the President. I simply don't understand his manner, unless he was just disgusted to be on stage with a snake or mad that his wedding anniversary was being ruined. What a disappointment. Meanwhile, at every turn and in ways not noticeable to much of the electorate, Romney lied!

"5 Takeaways from the Denver Debate" by Maggie Haberman, Politico

Oct. 4, 2012, ([http://www.politico.com/news/stories/1012/82006.html?hp=t3\\_3](http://www.politico.com/news/stories/1012/82006.html?hp=t3_3))



(DENVER) One presidential debate is now in the books; two are left to go.

The conventional wisdom about Denver will hold this morning. Mitt Romney was the victor over President Barack Obama in the first of three debates marking the last month of the 2012 campaign.

The debate was relatively sleepy, and there were no fireworks or big “moments” to speak of, but Romney scored on points against a barely-there incumbent.

It isn't clear the Denver debate will be the “game-changer” that some of Romney's supporters predicted in its immediate aftermath, but Obama adviser David Axelrod set the expectations in the spin room when he indicated he expects the Republican will get a bounce off his performance.

What Romney definitely did was earn himself a second look from the slim pool of undecided and persuadable voters still considering their options, and give himself a tighter messaging framework to use, if he is able to, before the next debate in New York two weeks from now.

Below, Politico's five takeaways:

### 1. The Newt-slayer is back.

The Romney on stage Wednesday night bore a much closer resemblance to the one who ground up Newt Gingrich in the Florida GOP primary debate when his campaign depended on it.

Romney was aggressive, knew his points, and pushed back whenever there was an opportunity. He more than passed the test of being able to stand on the same platform as the president of the United States.

Romney didn't make any sweeping new vision statements. But he was sharp and able to rattle off statistics with ease. He stayed focused on the president and, unlike Obama, seemed mindful of the camera being on him even when it wasn't his turn to speak. His response on Obama's health-care plan was about the way it was enacted, as opposed to a muddled explanation of his own health plan as governor of Massachusetts. And he did not let Obama score a point off him without firing back.

Romney wasn't perfect — a quip about Big Bird that landed like a lead feather, and he had a tendency to get a bit bogged down in the weeds of tax plans and statistics during the debate's key first half hour, possibly because he was a bit overprepared.

There were no knockout punches either, but a thousand cuts that made Obama bleed.

### 2. Obama has a lot of work do.

Post-debate, the president's campaign was spinning valiantly in the media filing center. But there was no mistake among Democratic operatives here and in other states that Obama blew it.

It was one of the weakest performances ever turned in by a man known for his oratorical skill in speeches, and well enough (if less consistently solidly) in debates. Obama looked like he just wasn't enjoying himself. He gave halting answers, and seemed exhausted and irritable at times. He nodded frequently when Romney talked, dismissively saying “okay” while the former governor was midway through a response at one point.

The president came alive a bit at the end, using his line about Romney as “extreme,” but it was rather late, and by then impressions had formed.

Obama and his campaign team may actually feel otherwise, but for 90 minutes, Obama's body language and approach also signaled that he doesn't consider beating Romney a huge challenge. The president seemed to be playing things safe. If so, that's a problem because the race remains close and there is a month — and two debates — left.

One of the most surprising elements of Obama's performance was what he didn't say. The president never raised Romney's secretly-taped comments about 47 percent of Americans at a fundraiser, or said the words Bain Capital, or questioned the GOP nominee about his tax returns, despite ample time devoted to the candidates' tax plans. It was more than a little puzzling.

Obama didn't invoke any of the attack lines that Democrats have used for months to keep Romney off balance, a decision that had a number of Obama supporters apoplectic about the strategy.

Obama aides insisted such obvious omissions weren't by design. If that's true, it suggests a candidate who wasn't in good form. If they're not being candid, it may have been a way of avoiding making a personal attack on stage, something that is harder to pull off, and which could make Obama look petty. But it also let Romney shape the narrative of the debate.

It remains to be seen whether this will be Obama's version of George W. Bush's first debate in 2004, in which the incumbent fared poorly. It remains to be seen if Obama will be on his game in a more advantageous format for the next round — town hall-style face-off in New York on Oct. 16.

The real problem for Obama was that he signaled he wasn't fighting for the race, while Romney — for the first time in awhile — showed that he was doing just that. Voters don't like it when it seems like candidates are taking things for granted and Obama can't assume that Romney, who's a fighter, isn't a threat.

### 3. Romney also still has work to do.

Only one of Romney's challenges was the stature gap, and he certainly went a long way toward closing it on Wednesday night. But there was no way for Romney to accomplish all he needs to at this late stage of the race in 90 minutes, either.

The GOP nominee tried to accomplish one of his tasks — humanizing himself — by invoking the tribulations of voters who have approached him and his wife, Ann, on the campaign trail. He used a much more Clintonian approach than Obama did when the president relied again on a biography he's turned to repeatedly to describe his mother's family as working-class.

Romney even managed to make the most of the first five minutes of the debate, when Obama acknowledged his 20th wedding anniversary, and the Republican made a joke about the president picking the most romantic setting possible to celebrate it — with Romney.

But Romney has a ways to go on this front, and his best opportunity may be at the New York debate. He will interact with voters, and have the opportunity to show he's more Clinton than George H.W. Bush when he's in that type of setting.

Yet Romney will also have to get more specific on his tax plan, on which Obama pressed him repeatedly. Romney responded that Obama wasn't telling the truth, and the president is hardly being specific himself about his second-term vision. But this is where the power of incumbency helps.

### 4. Lehrer lost control.

Moderator Jim Lehrer spent 10 minutes before the debate detailing, carefully, the rules of the game to the crowd gathered in the debate hall, and then explaining to the candidates the format. The crowd, ordered to silence, was compliant. Lehrer, however, got lost onstage.

Early on, Romney ground Lehrer down repeatedly in exchanges that made the GOP nominee look a bit testy at times when he pushed Lehrer for a chance to respond to some of Obama's remarks. But the candidate got the better of the moderator.

Lehrer ultimately stopped trying to tame Romney, and only occasionally did so with Obama. The first question ended up as a protracted back-and-forth over tax policy, but went so long that Lehrer himself got a bit frustrated.

What's more, the questions Lehrer asked were so loosely framed that the candidates were able to do with them what they wanted. And among the significant questions that were not put to the candidates were ones about foreign policy, especially the situation in Libya (to be fair, that was not an official topic of the debate).

The Obama campaign faulted Lehrer at points following the debate. Obama deputy campaign manager Stephanie Cutter told CNN that Lehrer let a “testy” Romney go on, but didn’t repeat the charge to a gaggle of reporters. Romney’s camp dismissed such moderator complaints as whining, but the case could be made that Lehrer was lax with both men.

Lehrer has a sterling reputation as a debate moderator at the presidential level. But the flabbiness of the Denver face-off was striking.

##### 5. There was some substance and a lot of centrism.

If there was any question that Romney is making an effort to move toward the center — at a fairly late stage in the race — that became clear at this debate.

He talked up his bipartisan approach as governor of Massachusetts, a touchstone he’s reached for occasionally but not regularly in the general election.

He painted himself as a problem solver, and steered clear of some of the more troublesome aspects of policy that could paint him as too far to the right. On the issue of voucherizing Medicare, he framed his response with care, mindful of how the issue plays, and without talking about the need for entitlement reform. He made sure that voters knew that he wasn’t in favor of changing Medicare for current seniors, and repeated his stump claim that Obama’s health care plan would cut Medicare spending.

And despite the Democratic National Convention containing frequent references to abortion rights, and the success with which Democrats believe they have used it as a cudgel against Romney, the president never raised it.

There was an expected exchange about “Obamacare” and “Romneycare,” but it yielded little by way of new information.

The questions Lehrer asked also allowed for a bit more of a substantive exchange than we’ve seen through a lot of the campaign — although he did not challenge either candidate on some of their more dubious claims.

Also absent? The much-anticipated “zingers” from either candidate. Beyond Romney’s Big Bird line and his quip about Obama having his own house and a plane, but not his own facts, there were few memorable lines in this debate. It’s a striking fact for a campaign that’s been defined, on both sides, by an attempt to exploit gaffes.

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"Bolivian Rice Soup (*Sopa de Arroz*)" by Chef Noly, Noly's World Cuisine/BoliviaBella

Oct. 2, 2012, (<http://www.nolysinc.blogspot.com/2012/10/bolivian-rice-soup-sopa-de-arroz.html>)

The weather in Santa Cruz, Bolivia lately has been going from one extreme to another. Tremendous amounts of rain fell in a short period of time making travel to the outskirts of Santa Cruz difficult. Then heat and dryness caused the death of many chickens. The heat also is causing trouble for cows. After the cows grazed on their allotted land, the land did not regrow plants fast enough to continue sustaining the cows needs. So cows are now being transported to other areas where viable grazing land is more plentiful.

For this week's post I've decided to give you a quick and easy soup recipe that can be made with or without meat. The version below is vegetarian but feel free to add your favorite meat.

- 12 cups broth (use your favorite homemade or store bought vegetable, beef or chicken broth)
- 1 medium Spanish onion, minced
- 1 bell pepper, minced (use green, red, yellow or orange bell peppers)
- 2-3 T fresh parsley, chopped
- 1/2 cup tomato, peeled and grated
- 1 small turnip, grated
- 1 stalk celery, minced
- Salt and pepper to taste
- 1/2 t ground cumin
- vegetable oil
- 1/2 cup rice
- 4 small red potatoes, peeled and cut in half
- 1/4 cup frozen peas
- 1 large carrot, peeled and shaved into long thin slices
- 1/4 t dried oregano, crushed

In a large saucepan over medium heat saute the onion, bell pepper, tomato, turnip and celery in 1-2 T oil. Stir often for about 10 minutes.

Add 1 T chopped parsley, cumin and salt and pepper.

In a large soup pot combine the sauteed vegetables and the broth. Bring to a boil then add the rice, cover and cook over medium heat for about 15 minutes.

Add the potatoes and peas then continue to cook for another 10-15 minutes or until the potatoes and rice are tender.

Add carrots and oregano. Simmer for 10 minutes.

Serve in large soup bowls and garnish with remaining parsley.

I love to add shredded green cabbage to this soup at the same time I add the rice. The shredded cabbage with the carrot ribbons look beautiful and taste delicious. You can also turn this into a seafood soup by using shrimp broth and adding in shrimp, scallops and chunks of fish.

(To order saltenas please visit Noly's World Cuisine at <http://nolys.vpweb.com>.)

20121003-02

10:53

Pam

Re: "My Take: 'I'm Spiritual but Not Religious' Is a Cop-Out" (reply to SteveB, FotM Newsletter #239)

How much truth is necessary for the good life? More vexing still, what is truth anyway? I take issue with the FotM article that chastises people who call themselves "spiritual" but not "religious." Make up your mind, the author says, as if it were actually possible for a thinking person to do so. The truth is, we do not know what the Truth is and probably never will. "There is more in heaven and earth...than is dreamed of in your philosophy."

Believers hold religious truths to be immutable and eternal. Scientists find truth in empirical data, which is often counter-intuitive. There is only one truth at a time in science. Either the earth revolves around the sun or it doesn't. We may not know the dimensions of the cosmos, but we do know we live in a heliocentric universe. Science is always open to new "truths" that replace the old ones. Imagine a world where "science" was caring for tradition that never changed.

Quite obviously religion varies from culture to culture. Over the centuries some have fallen (no one believes that Zeus sends down thunderbolts any longer), while others have come to prominence, almost always (always?) with an uncomfortable amount of violence involved. Religion is NOT self-evident, the way gravity is. It requires a leap of faith that a trust in antibiotics does not. The right drug will cure you, whether you believe in it or not. You only need to "make up your mind" about something that is not self-evident and lacks empirical evidence, and in that case, it's impossible to find a "right" answer, only a provisionally useful or comforting one. We make such choices all the time. We may believe the Colts will win the game on Saturday; we may believe enough to bet money on it. But when they lose, our belief counts for nothing.

As human beings, we don't know everything, very far from it. Everything is provisional, and living with ambiguity and an open mind is the best we can do. The essay criticizes folks who opt out of the confines of organized religion, preferring to do "what feels good" rather than what doctrine dictates. I see that not as a criticism but as a rational way to live. It's rational to want to feel good. If prostrating yourself before a wooden idol makes you feel good, then where's the harm? I would feel ridiculous doing that, but, hey, I don't have to. Loving my children makes me feel good. Helping a friend makes me feel good. Helping a stranger makes me feel good. Whatever the origin of those feelings, they are real to me, and I see no reason to dismiss them. I realize I believe what I have chosen to, just as much as the next person. And I admit that those beliefs have sometimes led to unfortunate outcomes, and I have changed my mind. I will probably change my mind again about fundamental things before all is said and done, but that doesn't disturb me. It is not a loss of integrity to internalize the lessons life brings to you. It is not a strength to cling to the impossible.

20121003-03

12:49

SteveB

Re: "My Take: 'I'm Spiritual but Not Religious' Is a Cop-Out" (reply to Pam, above)

Powerful and impeccable, Pam! Yet you know, now, that the devil will be after you, right? Haha

I agree with you about all this, pretty much, but I wonder if the writer of the article was just not a good enough writer to make us understand exactly what he was talking about... Although it seems the author is a Christian, I think I agree, too, with what I thought was his point (but I may be wrong): If you're going to believe in magic, you might as well believe in big, conventional magic or else give magic up.

I think giving it up seems like a distinctly good option to many of us.

And besides, I guess the team of linguists and scientists and religio who are, at this moment, writing the Bible (well, *re-writing* it) won't be done for another 100 years, they estimate.

Until then, I'm not quite sure how Christians can know what to believe, as far as the details go. And that's just the way it is, I believe. I don't mean to offend anyone.

And I think I agree with the author that New Age magic, quantum physics, UFO's, and angels don't add much to our spiritual or cultural enlightenment. Science is unkind, relentless, and extremely dangerous too, but it's what we

have available to try to understand the powerful yearning for God or spiritual reality that seems so innate in humans.

And I want to add one important point. I feel so fortunate and I believe we are all so lucky to have people like MarthaH (see her excellent "essay" today in *FotM Newsletter* #235 about the importance of local politics) and Pam (just to give the two most recent examples), who are unafraid to put inner truth, passion, caring, and love (*agape/philios*) into everything they write. THANK YOU ALL!

<a href="#">20121003-05</a>	13:24	Pam	Re: "My Take: 'I'm Spiritual but Not Religious' Is a Cop-Out" (reply to SteveB, above)
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Re. religion: bottom line: I don't care what anyone believes so long as those beliefs don't impinge on other people. It's fun to try to articulate and defend what I believe (or don't), but I'm not so arrogant as to think I have enough answers to be able to tell others what to believe. Lots of people cite the apparent inherent need in humans to have religion, and that may be true. I don't know what happened to me then, because I just don't have that need. There are plenty of things I DO need, like love and friendship and safety and books, but, much as I might like it, I can't believe in the supernatural.

Well, tonight is the first round of debates. I don't know about the candidates, but I'm nervous. I think I'll wait to catch it in clips after the fact. I can't bear to watch screw-ups in real time.

<a href="#">20121003-08</a>	15:08	SteveB	Re: "My Take: 'I'm Spiritual but Not Religious' Is a Cop-Out" (reply to Pam, above)
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Marci and I were just talking about how incredibly nervous either of us would be having to debate for President in front of the world. Incredible. How and why would anyone do it?

I'm going to try to watch in real time, but I am very nervous too. Jeez, I hope the idiot shows his true colors clearly.

<a href="#">20121003-09</a>	15:20	Pam	Re: "My Take: 'I'm Spiritual but Not Religious' Is a Cop-Out" (reply to SteveB, above)
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I hope those "zingers" come across as phony as they actually are.

<a href="#">20121003-04</a>	13:09	SteveB	"Drudge, Daily Caller Hype Old Obama Speech, Trolling Entire Political World"
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DRUDGE DEBUNKED!

"Drudge, Daily Caller Hype Old Obama Speech, Trolling Entire Political World" by Jason Linkins, Huffington Post

Oct. 2, 2012, ([http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/10/02/drudge-daily-caller-obama\\_n\\_1934441.html?utm\\_hp\\_ref=politics](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/10/02/drudge-daily-caller-obama_n_1934441.html?utm_hp_ref=politics))

(WASHINGTON) The Daily Caller, working in collaboration with Fox News, released a video Tuesday night of a speech President Barack Obama delivered at Hampton University back in 2007. The release was preceded by an all-afternoon Drudge Report banner headline splash, billing the video as some sort of electorally game-changing revelation with racial overtones that was going to affect the 2012 campaign ahead of the first presidential debate.

It ended up being a rerun of a 2007 story that was already well known to reporters and political partisans. So, as a piece of new and incendiary news, it was something of a letdown. However, as a piece of Internet trolling that

forced political reporters to bide their time until the evening release of the video, instead of watching the goings-on in the last days of Major League Baseball's regular season, it was a work of genius.

**So, here, in 2012, is how a screaming Drudge-siren scoop comes and goes, in 10 easy steps:**

1. We get a big tease, about a bombshell video scoop that's going to "drop," from Matt Drudge. He uses Twitter to get the word out. Relatively speaking, that's kind of new. Anyway, this is enough to prompt zillions of political reporters to point their browsers at the Drudge Report and start refreshing like mad. Relatively speaking, that's kind of old. But, hey, if you want to attract lemmings, give 'em a cliff.
2. Naturally, one sort of suspects that something of a letdown is coming. Condoleezza Rice, after all, was not selected to run alongside Mitt Romney. But the promised outcome is that the video is going to "cause controversy, ignite accusations of racism -- in both directions!" (No, I've no idea what "both directions" is supposed to mean.)
3. Those madcap browser-refreshers get gradual payoffs. We learn that the video in question will be shown on Fox News later Tuesday night. It's billed as "Obama's other race speech." A later update teases: "THE ACCENT ... THE ANGER ... THE ACCUSATIONS ... THE SHOUT OUT TO REV. WRIGHT WHO IS IN THE AUDIENCE..."
4. Matt Drudge has an image to his Obama video splash, of Obama speaking, in front of some sort of drum kit. He is apparently unaware that Google allows anyone to do a reverse-search to find information about images. A reporter from BuzzFeed, Jessica Testa, figures this out, and identifies the image as Obama, giving a speech at Hampton University, in 2007. She and her colleague, Andrew Kaczynski, start finding relevant portions of the speech on YouTube.
5. As it turns out, Andrew Sullivan's The Daily Dish has had a transcript of the prepared remarks of the speech since 2007. (Though Obama did, at times, improvise from those remarks, as the videos BuzzFeed gathered demonstrate.)
6. And Politico reported the "shout-out" to Wright in 2008 as one of the "top eight gaffes of the campaign." By which I mean, the 2008 campaign.
7. Newsbusters wrote about this appearance, speech, et al., back in 2008 as well. This virtually assures that everyone who was a) alive in 2008 and b) a conservative political blogger, is well aware of this story.
8. Actually, they were likely aware of it even before Newsbusters wrote about it. CNN's Roland Martin, in fact, pushed back against the conservative outcry over this speech in 2007.
9. Tucker Carlson, who was chiefly responsible for rolling out this old video, insisted earlier today that all the extant video clips that were found to be in wide circulation were incomplete, and that he, exclusively, had the full video. What's *really* strange about this is that Tucker Carlson already covered this speech -- back in 2007, on his eponymous MSNBC show.
10. The Daily Caller and Sean Hannity collaborate on an explosive release of this story, releasing it simultaneously at 9 p.m., as if it had not happened a long time ago.

And that's how the entire political Internet was briefly trolled on Tuesday, and into Tuesday night.

For what end? Well, it's a largely a reheat of something that conservatives have already pretty much bugged out over once before. The Daily Caller, writing up the video in a post published to coincide with Hannity, runs down a list of what it finds objectionable: Obama shouted out the Rev. Wright, he used "an accent he almost never adopts in public" (meaning it's an "accent" he sometimes uses), and he criticizes the federal government's response to Hurricane Katrina. (As did Bobby Jindal, and David Vitter.)

Obama expresses his dissatisfaction thusly:

People in Washington, they wake up, they're surprised: 'There's poverty in our midst! Folks are frustrated! Black people angry!' Then there's gonna be some panels, and hearings, and there are commissions and there are reports, and then there's some aid money, although we don't always know where it's going — it can't seem to get to the people who need it — and nothin' really changes, except the news coverage quiets down and Anderson Cooper is on to something else.

And that ...*pretty much accurately describes Washington's official response to this*, actually, right down to Anderson Cooper finding something new to cover. The only thing I'd object to, is that there didn't end up being all that many panels and hearings and commissions and reports. So, Obama is in the wrong here, by giving Capitol Hill even that much credit.

Obama goes on to object that the Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act -- which requires localities to match federal relief funds, a requirement that was waived for the Sept. 11 attacks and their aftermath -- was not waived for Hurricane Katrina relief. But Obama is hardly alone in calling for reforms of the Stafford Act. Here's Desiree Evans of the Institute for Southern Studies:

For years policy advocates have called for an overhaul of the Stafford Act, the primary law that also governs the Federal Emergency Management Agency's role in responding to disasters. Policy advocates say that amending the Stafford Act will better serve people in the wake of disaster. Following the disastrous federal response to Hurricane Katrina, this call to action became even more urgent.

As the Louisiana Family Recovery Corps pointed out in a recent statement, the Stafford Act was not designed to deal with massive disasters, and it has ultimately retarded recovery in Louisiana and other states. According to the Recovery Corps, "the rigidity of the Act and its voluminous amendments has certainly served to handcuff those federal agents, officers, and agencies working under its oversight."

[...]

Critics of the Stafford Act also argue that it needs to give FEMA greater latitude in how it responds to catastrophes as devastating as Hurricane Katrina. The assistance flowing from the Stafford Act has been inadequate following major disasters and unable to fulfill vital needs, human rights advocates argue. Reform advocates also call for more flexibility in providing cash assistance quickly -- particularly in the form of grants to states and localities, while also avoiding the type of bureaucratic red tape that has marred post-Katrina recovery efforts.

Following Hurricane Katrina local Gulf Coast officials said the "match" requirement in the Stafford Act -- which said that affected communities had to pay a 25 percent match upfront before they can receive federal disaster fund -- played a large role in the pace of recovery in the region. After Katrina, the White House reduced the match requirement to 10 percent, but it was still a hefty sum for devastated areas.

Did race play a role in the response to Katrina? That question was put to the 2008 slate of Democratic Party candidates. Well-known angry black guy Christopher Dodd opined: "I believe that if this had occurred in a place with a majorly white population, we would have seen a much more rapid response and a consistent response." Here's Howard Dean, on the same topic: "We must ... come to terms with the ugly truth that skin color, age and economics played a deadly role in who survived and who did not."

It was a fairly mainstream Democratic Party critique of the Katrina response, in other words.

Beyond that, the objections seem to be largely based on Obama acknowledging that the black community hasn't exactly had the easiest time of it in America for the past three centuries. The Daily Caller contends thusly: "Obama describes a racist, zero-sum society, in which the white majority profits by exploiting black America. The mostly black audience shouts in agreement. The effect is closer to an Al Sharpton rally than a conventional campaign event."

Pardon me -- I mean to say that the Daily Caller *recontends* things that conservative critics already contended four years ago, about this speech. (Newsbusters, circa 2008: "This entire speech is filled with nothing but class warfare, expansions of social programs, raising the minimum wage, typical great society type junk all couched squarely as a civic responsibility enmeshed with Obama's view of Biblical precepts.")

Obama campaign press secretary Ben LaBolt responded to all of this, thusly:

In a transparent attempt to change the subject from his comments attacking half of the American people, Mitt Romney's allies recirculated video of a 2007 event that was open to and extensively covered by the press at the time. The only thing shocking about this is that they apparently think it's wrong to suggest that we should help returning veterans, children leaving foster care and other members of Mitt Romney's 47 percent get training that will allow them to find the best available jobs. If the Romney campaign believes that Americans will accept these desperate attacks tomorrow night in place of specific plans for the middle class, it's they who are in for a surprise.

There's really not much more to say about this. If you were inclined to object to the content of this speech, you've been so inclined since the 2008 campaign, and you're probably all het up again tonight. If you're open to the argument but need convincing, this might do the trick, but it's just as likely that it will be seen as pretty weak tea.

Four years of the Obama White House basically makes it hard to present Obama -- now -- as an "angry black man" -- the reason Keegan-Michael Key and Jordan Peele's "Obama Anger Translator" comedy sketches work is because Obama never manifests that sort of raw, racially-tinged ire, so watching "Luther," his "anger translator" indulge himself in it is a hilarious contrast. The closest Obama came to that sort of acrimony was when he referred to the police who arrested Harvard professor Henry Louis Gates Jr for breaking and entering "stupid." (Mind you, Gates was accused of breaking and entering his own home. If the day ever comes that the police arrest me for doing the same, I plan on calling them "stupid," quite a bit. They, in turn, should plan to take it with humility.)

So what's the point of this? Well, it's become an article of faith among many conservatives that Sen. John McCain cost himself the election when, in the late stages of the 2008 campaign, he didn't make greater use of the Rev. Wright controversy, and all of the attendant racial dog whistles it offered, to win the election. This rehash of a news event that was exceedingly well covered four years ago is less about new information, and more about fulfilling a conservative tribal need, left unfulfilled by the previous Republican candidate.

[20121003-06](#)

13:29

Pam

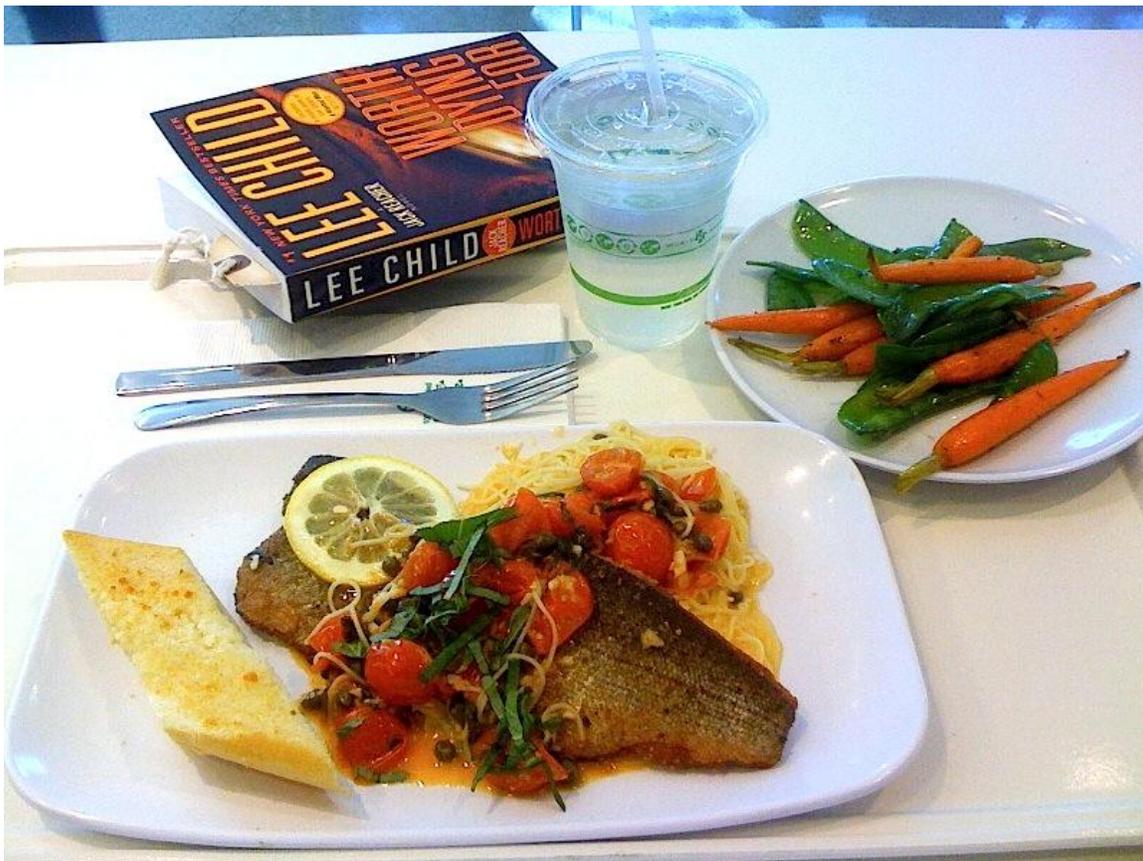
Re: "Fire Congress, Vote Out Incumbents" (reply to MarthaH, FotM Newsletter #239)

I wish you were still in the classroom, Martha.

Too busy for details today, so you will have to imagine another superb meal's verbiage.

Bounced from a fishless bistro to the pasta line, Chef Patricia proved to me just how good pasta and fish are together with this delicious pitch-perfect seared trout filet over angel hair pasta in garlic butter sauce with prima vera sauce; a side of fresh carrots and snow peas from the Bistro gave balance to my nutritional needs.

I ate every caper and scrap of pasta.



Seared Trout with Veg Side

[Source of original email unknown. -SteveB]

HO - HO - HOOO, GREEN GIANT!

This is actually a vegetable growing in Brazil called "Chuchu" pronounced shoo-shoo.

Well, well, well....they DO grow on trees! Look how happy she is!



[20121003-11](#) 19:28 Marci Fw: Photos: Rescued Squirrel

You are going to love these pictures.

This is your "Aaahhhh moment" for the day -- Squirrel Rescued

Love this one!

Soldiers in Belarus found a little squirrel and brought it to the Warrant officer. The squirrel was very weak and about to die, so the officer took care of it, fed it like a baby every 4 hours.

Three months ago the guy left the army and now works as a taxi driver -- and the squirrel is always in his pocket no matter where he goes!

"Rescuing one animal may not change the world, but for that animal, their world is changed forever!" - Unknown



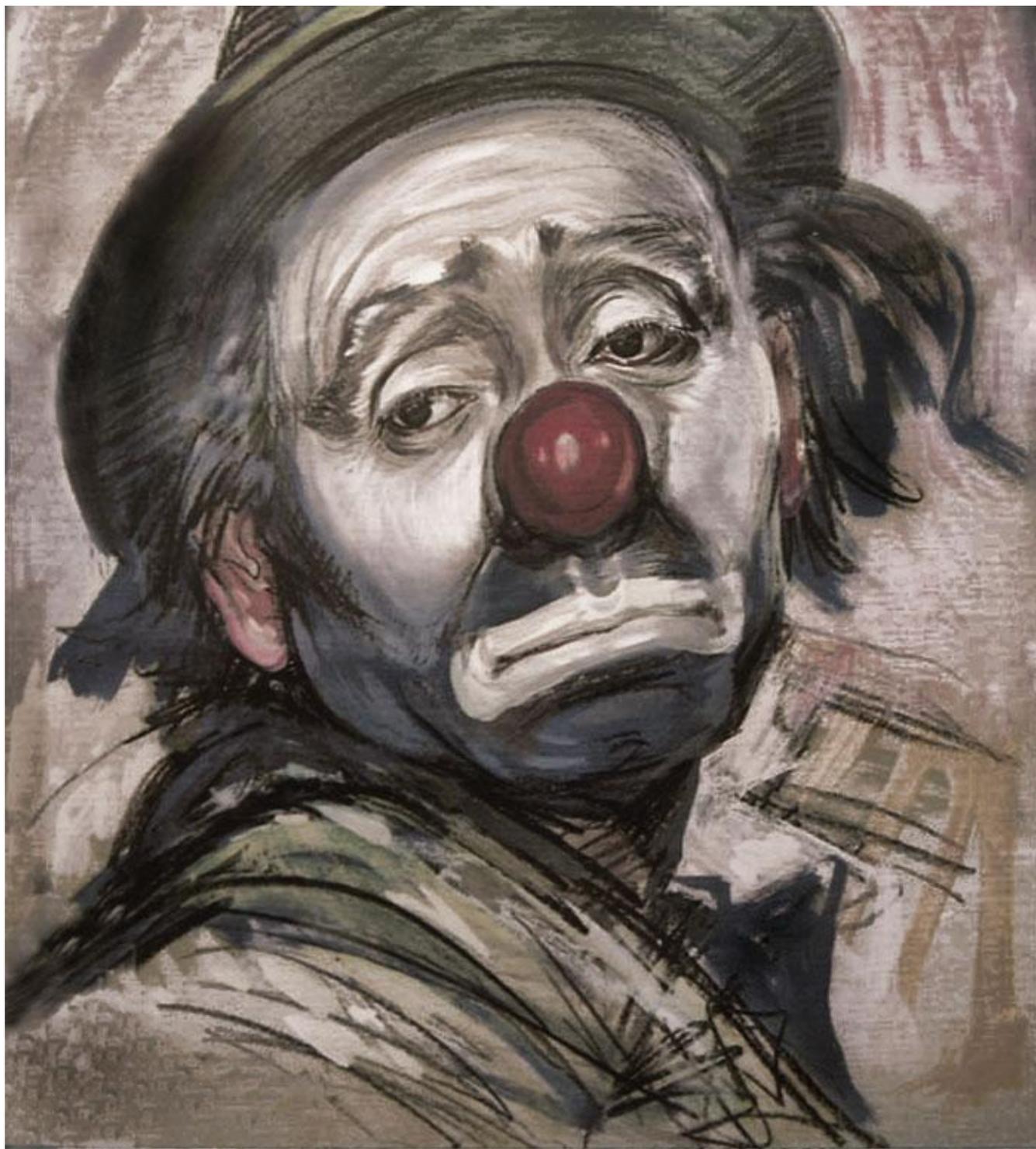








<http://www.ravingsofamadhousewife.com/2011/03/facebook-and-amish-people-and-sad.html>



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

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# FRIENDS OF THE MIDDLE NEWSLETTER #241 — OCT. 5, 2012

*Welcome to always lively political discussion and whatever else comes up.*  
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**INDEX: Click here.**

## **Wake Up, Big Guy!**

(posted by Steven W. Baker / SteveB, Oct. 5, 2012)

I guess there's always next time... My question would have to be, did the President "throw" the debate? Why did he not even defend his positions, let alone not attack even obvious weaknesses? Very, very weird....

"Barack's Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Day" by Howard Fineman, Huffington Post

Oct. 4, 2012, ([http://www.huffingtonpost.com/howard-fineman/obama-debate-performance\\_b\\_1940604.html?utm\\_hp\\_ref=politics](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/howard-fineman/obama-debate-performance_b_1940604.html?utm_hp_ref=politics))



(DENVER) Yes, we can. But can he?

Something is not quite right with President Barack Obama. That was clear long before his passive, distracted performance here Wednesday night against Mitt Romney. The president needs to get back some form of his old magic if he hopes to secure a victory that, until the Denver debate, seemed all but inevitable, even to many of his foes.

The evidence of the president's distance and distaste for the campaign is everywhere. He is invisible around Washington, a place he clearly doesn't like and where he has made few new political friends. He mailed in his acceptance speech in Charlotte, N.C., looking at the end like a man who couldn't wait to get off the stage. He has dutifully hit the campaign trail, but not with the zest or the frenzied response of 2008. And he clearly didn't master his brief for the debate when he went to ground in Las Vegas, though he did take time for a day trip to Hoover Dam.

What gives?

Well, no president, cocooned for four years in the adulation of staff and riding around in Air Force One dealing with global issues, like to descend back into the muck of the campaign world.

But most manage to pretend to relish it. Not this president, certainly not last night. He seemed to be close to pouting at times.

This not-quite-there Obama has its roots in the kind of campaign he decided to run: lacking in big new ideas for a second term, essentially defensive, based on the destruction of Romney as an alternative. It doesn't fit the positive, good-guy image that the president had built for himself in his relatively short political career -- and indeed, that he had built in his entire adult life as a star student, community organizer, civil rights lawyer and law professor.

He'd rather be the master of uplift than the king of the put-down.

And any president would rather tell a simple, positive story than a complex, gray one. Obama is stuck with the need to do the latter.

He has been extraordinarily lucky in politics until now. Two opponents' sex scandals, one each for the primary and general elections, cleared his path to the Senate. With luck and timing, he rode to the White House on a wave of disgust with George W. Bush.

But as president, he has faced the worst and most intractable recession since the 1930s, a Republican Party that refuses to deal in good faith, a world economy in the midst of wrenching change and a decline in institutions that once provided order and respect.

It's a tough row. He has had successes, but he has also made mistakes. For a man who was used to getting an A on every exam and winning every coveted accolade, it's tough to know that barely half of the American people, if that, think you are doing a decent job in your current course work.

Obama is trying to deal with this unsettling personal reality largely alone -- in good part by his own choice. He is surrounded by a small circle of good friends that has, if anything, grown smaller and tighter during his time in Washington.

The inner circle -- Michelle Obama, Valerie Jarrett, David Axelrod, Eric Whitaker, Jim Messina and David Plouffe, to name most of them -- tell him how wonderful, destined and inevitable he is. But the president didn't act Wednesday night like a man who believed it. Perhaps their advice is getting a little old, or repetitive, or unrealistic.

The return of Bill Clinton, including his role as the star of the Democratic convention, is a mixed blessing for a prideful, competitive president. After all, in 2008 Clinton dismissed him as a "fairy tale" candidate who was nothing more than an Ivy-educated Jesse Jackson.

Now he needs Clinton more than ever. It's an awkward, galling man-hug.

Obama loves to be liked and doesn't like direct confrontation with people he knows or thinks he knows don't like him. Those two qualities have hampered his presidency and limited his first-debate presentation. He gave up trying to work with congressional Republicans, yet in Denver he tried lamely to claim credit as a deficit hawk, playing a GOP game he was never going to win.

Seeking to be agreeable or at least not confrontational, he allowed Romney -- who cheerfully tossed off inaccuracies or outright lies all night -- to cozy up to him and steal his lunch money on issues such as Social Security and commitment to bipartisanship.

Romney would be a bipartisan president? Did anyone see how he cravenly quaffed the Tea Party Kool-Aid? Did Obama not notice? If he did, he didn't say so.

Above all, President Obama has always believed he was on the right side of history: the brainy young hipster from Hawaii, body-surfing to power on the Big Wave of social and demographic change. That sense of destiny was what he sold so effectively in 2008. When he said, "We are the change we have been waiting for," he meant that he was the change that we had been waiting for.

But now the destined Obama must become the determined one.

He has the inner resources to do it. He has to remember the lessons he learned as the son of a hard-luck single mother: that life isn't just about catching a wave. It's about learning to swim upstream.



"When Romney says he defends small business, let me tell you, I have a small business. I don't need a tax break -- hell, like most small businesses, we don't make money. We need health insurance. We need government loans. **Mr. President, if you can't explain why you are the Commander-in-Chief in this class war against the billionaire bandits attempting to seize our government, then get off the horse and let someone in the saddle who can ride.**" —Greg Palast, <http://www.nationofchange.org/what-hell-happened-1349363594>.

"Mitt Romney: Lying to Victory" by Barbara Morrill, Daily Kos

Oct. 4, 2012, (<http://www.dailykos.com/story/2012/10/04/1139793/-Mitt-Romney-Lying-to-victory?detail=email>)

The results of Wednesday night's first presidential debate are in and it's official: Mitt Romney won round one. He was aggressive, he was decisive, he delivered. Of course he also lied through his teeth for most of the debate.

**Romney lied:**

- When he claimed that "pre-existing conditions are covered under my plan." **They're not.**
- When he said that President Obama had "cut Medicare by \$716 billion to pay for Obamacare." **Obama didn't.**
- When he denied proposing a \$5 trillion tax cut. **He did.**
- When he said President Obama had "added almost as much to the federal debt as all the prior presidents combined." **Not even close.**
- When he resurrected "death panels." That was called "one of the biggest whoppers of the night."
- When he stated that half the green energy companies given stimulus funds had failed. **Only if three out of nearly three dozen is half.**

Stay tuned. These just scratch the surface.

[And the President called him out on NONE of these lies! –SteveB]

**Bumper stickers you'll never see on my car but they may be on the front seat.**



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We want to take it forward!**

**Bipartisanship**



**I'll hug your elephant  
if you'll kiss my ass**



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**Choose (D) to move forward.**

**Proud to Be Everything**



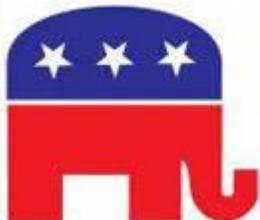
**The Right Wing Hates**

**Tea Party? White Whine  
Party is more like it.**

**HONK IF MY TAXES SUPPORT  
YOUR WHINY TEABAGGING ASS**

**Don't want government?**  
**Move to Somalia.**

**8 years of insanity**  
**and NOW you're mad?**



**Republicans 2012**  
Keeping Millions Out of Work  
to Put One Man Out of a Job

**When Did Jesus Become  
Pro-Rich, Pro-War and  
Only Pro-American?**

**AM I LIBERAL**  
**OR JUST WELL-EDUCATED?**

**IF LIBERALS HATED AMERICA**  
  
**WE'D VOTE REPUBLICAN**

democrats are sexy.   
who ever heard of a  
nice piece of elephant?



[20121004-03](#)

11:27

Pam

Re: Graphics: Bumper Stickers for Progressive Thinkers (reply to SandyI, above)

These are fabulous!

Am I the only interested American who skipped the debates last night? I couldn't bring myself to watch in case what apparently happened happened. I was hoping Romney would show his true colors and come off as an out-of-touch rich boy, but it seems he acquitted himself pretty well. What's with Obama? The stuffing seems to have gone out of him. I thought Bill Clinton was magisterial at the convention, and he obviously has the political genes to keep going like the Energizer bunny. But Obama seems to be forcing himself. I can't say I blame him; he's sitting on a horrible mess and everyone is mad at him. I'd be so depressed in those circumstances I'd never get out of bed. But he's got to get a grip. It's like he's used up all his fuel and is running on fumes. It could be he's depressed. If so, it's a shame he can't get Prozac or something, but that would never do for the leader of the free world. It takes a smart man to see the state of the world as it really is, and he's got the smarts and, I believe, the sensitivity. I read somewhere that intelligence may not be the most important quality for a president. To be blunt, dumber people see things more simply; whereas, the more intelligent consider all the angles, which is usually not so cheery. Clinton has the smarts, but he's fortunate to have a tough hide and enough ambition and confidence to plow through all obstacles. Even his health doesn't seem to have slowed him down all that much. I guess what I'm saying is, I empathize with Obama. That said, he's got to fake it till he makes it.

[20121004-06](#)

17:22

SteveB

From the Right: "Bam! Slam! Pow! Crash! BOOM!"

"Bam! Slam! Pow! Crash! BOOM!" by Erick Erickson, Red State

Oct. 4, 2012, (<http://www.redstate.com/2012/10/04/bam-slam-pow-crash-boom/>)

There was a surreal moment after the debate last night. On CNN, the polling went overwhelmingly for Mitt Romney among debate watchers. Basically two-thirds of the American public who watched the debate claimed Romney won. A majority claimed Romney was with them on taxes, the economy, healthcare, their views of government, etc. He dominated.

A CBS poll of undecided voters who watched the debate mirrored the CNN poll.

Suddenly the Democrats took to the airwaves and twitter to rail against the polls oversampling Republicans and being too heavily skewed, too instant to be meaningful, and clearly not an accurate statistical sample of anything.

About the same time Barack Obama's campaign team was melting down on television, the campaign sent out an email that did not even mention the Presidential debate. It just wanted more money.

The debate was so bad for Barack Obama I expect Eric Holder to send Jim Lehrer to GTMO. Barack Obama suddenly agrees with Republicans on defunding PBS. Without his precious TelePrompTer to feed his Gollumesque addiction to its illuminated, precious words, the President fell flat. Instead of John Kerry for a debate partner, the President should have just gone through airport security a few times or embraced BOHICA as a debate preparation strategy.

Put it to you this way, within ten minutes of the debate ending, Jessica Yellin of CNN spoke with Stephanie Cutter of the Obama campaign. Ms. Cutter conceded up front that Mitt Romney won on both debate preparation and debate style. It went downhill from there. She began parroting talking points about the debate she herself released to Obama surrogate at sun up yesterday morning. She had nothing new to add.

Mitt Romney had substance, counterarguments for Barack Obama's points, rebuttals, and a friendly manner. Barack Obama kept his head down at the podium and refused to make eye contact with Mitt Romney. This too is what Barack Obama did with the economy and Libya.

Barack Obama, at one point, interrupted Jim Lehrer and asked Lehrer to move on to a new topic. It was a brilliant metaphor for what Barack Obama did coming into office. He looked at the economy and decided to move on to Obamacare. His whole career has been one of passing the buck, shifting blame, and failing to take responsibility for tough challenges. He did the same last night.

For four years, Barack Obama has rarely been challenged and he handled it poorly last night. He was ill prepared, flustered easily, and came off as petulant. At some point we should expect the empty chair to ask Barack Obama to take a vacation day and let it debate instead.

I think the explanation for Obama's performance is pretty simple. Gods in the cult of personality do not like to come off Olympus to be challenged by mere mortals.

There is an important point, however, for Republicans. This was one debate. This was not the election. Mitt Romney showed he can do it. But the campaign needs your help now more than ever. Every penny helps. I guarantee you we are about to see the media resurrect the "Obama is the underdog" theme and, in the meantime, look for most media polls to suddenly have a D+20 sample.

Mitt Romney did fantastic last night.

[Could it have been some kind of "rope-a-dope" strategy on the President's part and he's gonna come out swinging and kick a\*s next time, so the press will mega-cover the big comeback/turnaround? Risky, but barely possible. If it's not strategy, why would his own people be so quick to say he did poorly? Most unusual! -SteveB]

<a href="#">20121004-01</a>	08:07	Charis	Slideshow: Santa Cruz, Bolivia
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The most viewed Bolivia slideshow on TripAdvisor. :)

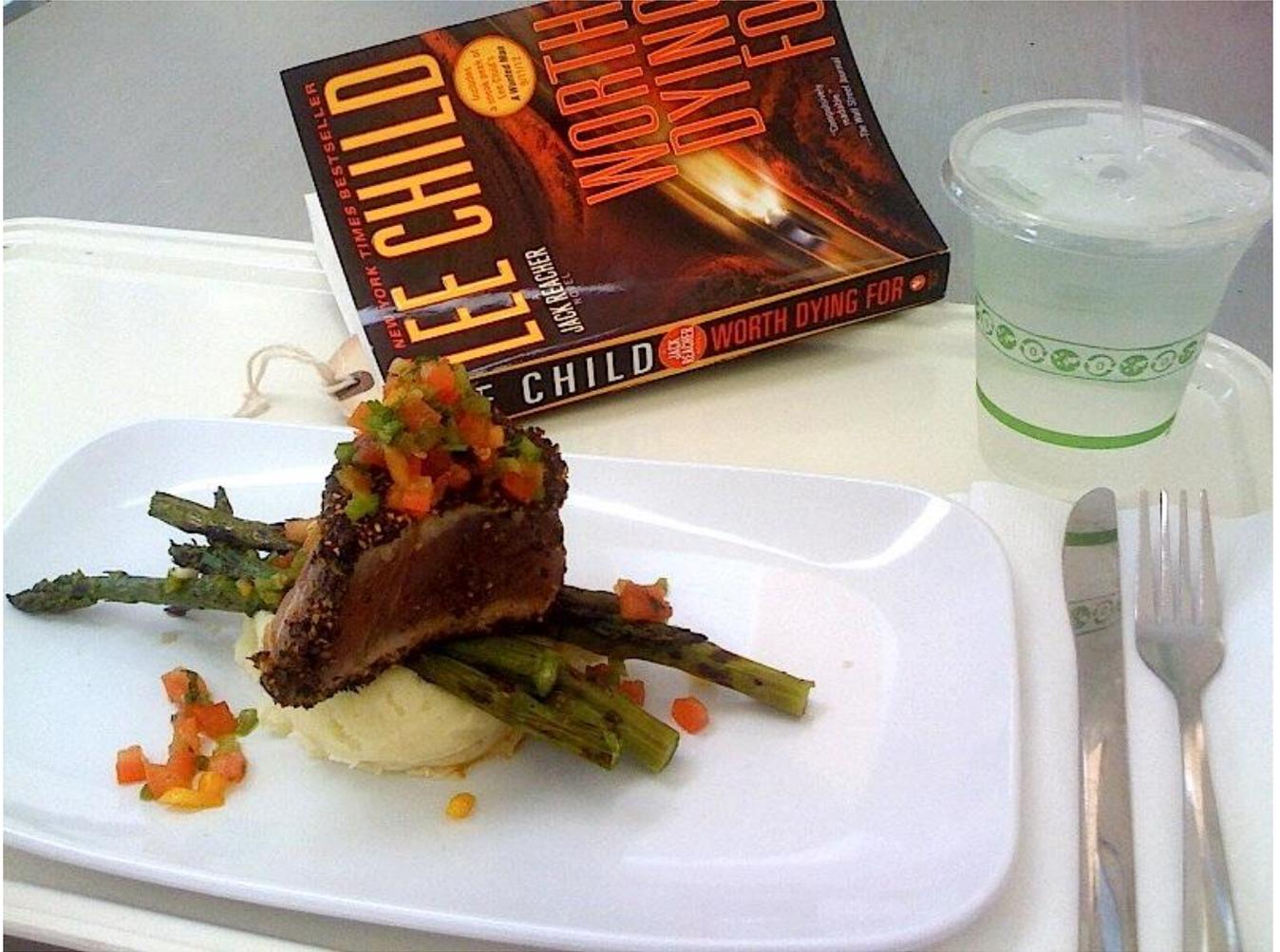
<http://tripwow.tripadvisor.com/tripwow/ta-0255-fe10-3980>

<a href="#">20121004-05</a>	14:04	Ben	Photo: Today's Seafood Lunch at Apple
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Such a classic meal, a favorite of my own among classics: grilled/seared/peppered tuna filet, grilled asparagus, starch item variable.

My tuna filet was over 2 inches thick, a real muscle slab from a large and powerful fish. It had a uniform crust on top and bottom, maybe just over a quarter inch on each side. The inside of the filet was exactly what I'd hoped: "rare is good!" I'd told Chef Kelli (I checked the spelling with her today) as I placed my order. Delicious on the veranda on a breezy mild Texas autumn day, every morsel savored along with a chunk of nicely grilled asparagus or a nibble of quietly fabulous mashers. Wasabi mashers are not really, of course.

That last wasn't a typo, it is a lead-in to a technical note. The potatoes were fresh this morning, of course (they even peel garlic for every meal, here), and the consistency was lump-less perfection, carefully just short of creamy. Definitely potato-forward mashers, exactly as I like. Flavor was zingy fresh-potato, not notably buttery, rich in degree. It's the "wasabi" that's "not". It added a pungent sharpness, and is exactly what you'd think it is, which only to be nitty, is not actually wasabi: it's powdered horseradish.



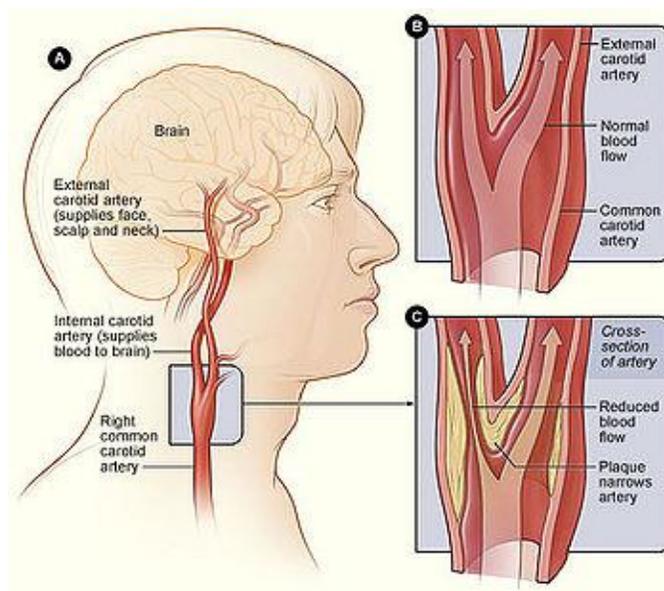
Pepper Crusted Aji Tuna, Grilled Asparagus, Wasabi Mashers

Good to know and remember.

[Source of original email unknown. –SteveB]

This one has been around before, so just to be on the safe side, it never hurts to forward something helpful!!

They Now Have a Fourth Stroke Indicator, the Tongue!



### **STROKE IDENTIFICATION: Remember the 1st Three Letters..... S. T. R.**

During a BBQ, a woman stumbled and took a little fall. She assured everyone that she was fine. They offered to call paramedics. She said she had just tripped over a brick because of her new shoes.

They got her cleaned up and got her a new plate of food. While she appeared a bit shaken up, Jane went about enjoying herself the rest of the evening.

Jane's husband called later telling everyone that his wife had been taken to the hospital - (at 6:00 PM Jane passed away.) She had suffered a stroke at the BBQ. Had they known how to identify the signs of a stroke, perhaps Jane would be with us today. Some don't die. They end up in a helpless, hopeless condition instead.

It only takes a minute to read this.

A neurologist says that if he can get to a stroke victim within 3 hours he can totally reverse the effects of a stroke...totally. He said the trick was getting a stroke recognized, diagnosed, and then getting the patient medically cared for within 3 hours, which is tough.

Thank God for the sense to remember the '3' steps - STR. Read and Learn!

Sometimes symptoms of a stroke are difficult to identify. Unfortunately, the lack of awareness spells disaster. The stroke victim may suffer severe brain damage when people nearby fail to recognize the symptoms of a stroke.

Now doctors say a bystander can recognize a stroke by asking three simple questions:

S — Ask the individual to SMILE.

T — Ask the person to TALK and SPEAK A SIMPLE PHRASE OR SENTENCE (Coherently) (i.e. "Chicken Soup")

R — Ask him or her to RAISE BOTH ARMS.

If he or she has trouble with ANY ONE of these tasks, call emergency number immediately and describe the symptoms to the dispatcher.

### **New Sign of a Stroke: Stick out Your Tongue**

NOTE: Another 'sign' of a stroke is this: Ask the person to 'stick' out his tongue. If the tongue is 'crooked', if it goes to one side or the other that is also an indication of a stroke.

A cardiologist says if everyone who gets this e-mail sends it to 10 people; you can bet that at least one life will be saved.

I have done my part. Will you?



**Stroke**

**WARNING SIGNS**

Stroke is a medical emergency. The American Stroke Association says you should know these warning signs because when it comes to a stroke, every second counts.

- Sudden numbness or weakness of the face, arm or leg, especially on one side of the body.
- Sudden confusion, trouble speaking or understanding
- Sudden trouble seeing in one or both eyes
- Sudden trouble walking, dizziness, loss of balance or coordination
- Sudden, severe headache with no known cause

The poster features a red ECG line graphic on the right side.

[http://www.hotfog.co.uk/rollers/rollers/pages/wallis\\_advance\\_1939/index.htm](http://www.hotfog.co.uk/rollers/rollers/pages/wallis_advance_1939/index.htm)



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

You can subscribe to this free, no-obligation, daily Newsletter filled with lively, intelligent discussion centered on politics and government, but ranging to anything members feel is important, interesting, or entertaining. To subscribe, use the form on our website or blog, or simply reply to this email with "Yes" or "Start" in the Subject line, then add our email address (below) to your Contacts or Safe list. To opt-out, reply with "No" or "Stop" in the subject line.

Welcome to all our new members who may be here for the first time. We want to hear from YOU! To submit your comment, you can use the form on our website or blog, or reply to this email with your two cents worth. Be sure to sign with your desired user name.

Your email address will always be kept strictly confidential.

Feel free to forward this Newsletter to anyone you know on the Right or the Left, though your motives might be different in each case. Regardless, PASS IT ON! Help keep your friends and acquaintances informed and thinking.

<http://www.FriendsOfTheMiddle.org>  
[FriendsOfTheMiddle@hotmail.com](mailto:FriendsOfTheMiddle@hotmail.com)



## FRIENDS OF THE MIDDLE NEWSLETTER #242 — OCT. 8, 2012

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

**INDEX: Click here.**

### **Maybe Someone You Know?**

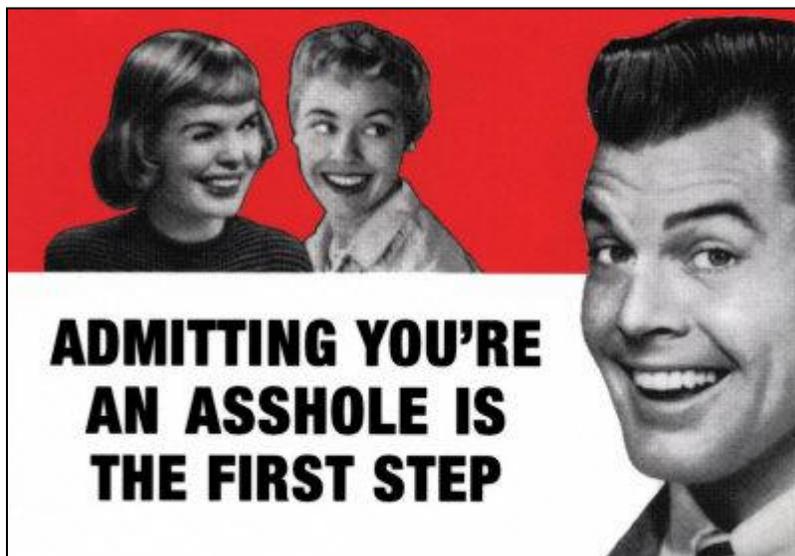
(posted by Steven W. Baker / SteveB, Oct. 8, 2012)

For sure, none of you and no Friends of the Middle, but there sure seem to be a lot of them out there, huh?

"The A-Hole in the Mirror" (book review) by Alex Balk, Slate

Oct. 5, 2012,

([http://www.slate.com/articles/arts/books/2012/10/ascent\\_of\\_the\\_a\\_word\\_by\\_geoffrey\\_nunberg\\_and\\_assholes\\_a\\_theory\\_by\\_aaron\\_james\\_reviewed.html?google\\_editors\\_picks=true](http://www.slate.com/articles/arts/books/2012/10/ascent_of_the_a_word_by_geoffrey_nunberg_and_assholes_a_theory_by_aaron_james_reviewed.html?google_editors_picks=true))



(On being *that* guy.)

A friend of mine who grew up in Los Angeles once declared that transplants to Gotham only truly become New Yorkers when they exchange the exhortation "motherfucker," which, to be sure, has a satisfying sting, for "cocksucker"—a designation more mellifluous, the ugliness behind its origin notwithstanding. And yet, as comforting as both those epithets may be, in the colloquial currency of a city where you are constantly confronted by a teeming mass of narcissists hell-bent on thwarting whatever goal you hope to achieve (even something simple as completing a speedy transaction at an ATM), the most common denomination of irritant—the dollar bill of swearsy, frustrated descriptors for those exasperating sacks of skin swarming our space—is "asshole."

This is not to suggest that the asshole is some sort of miscreant unique to the urban environment. There are assholes everywhere; the fact that cities are so densely packed simply provides us with more frequent opportunities for contact with them. Anyone who has ever driven on a highway, attempted to make a quick purchase in the express aisle at the grocery, or attended a family holiday gathering has encountered an asshole. One need only turn on the television to find oneself subject to the spectacle of an asshole condemning or defending another asshole, while yet a third asshole provides commentary on the assholishness of the previous two—a veritable Möbius strip of assholism. While so many of our natural resources seem to be running short these days, the supply of assholes appears to be a growth industry with unlimited upside.

But who and what exactly is the asshole? Two new books attempt to answer the question. U.C.–Berkeley linguist Geoffrey Nunberg's *Ascent of the A-Word* and U.C. –Irvine philosophy professor Aaron James' *Assholes: A Theory* focus on this commonplace scourge. Befitting their respective disciplines, Nunberg's book is more concerned with the evolution of the appellation while James grapples with the existential reality of the asshole in hopes that in understanding his (and the general consensus is that it's usually a he) essence one might more successfully manage him. Both books acknowledge their sizable debt to Harry G. Frankfurt's 1986 essay *On Bullshit*, popularized by its 2005 publication as a stand-alone volume. (In retrospect, it's a bit surprising that the book's success did not launch an entire genre of treatises based on bad words; pity the poor philosopher who missed the chance to explore the semiotics of "douchebag" before that word lost its cachet circa 2006.)

Here's how our anthropologists of assholes characterize their subjects. James:

A person counts as an *asshole* when, and only when, he systematically allows himself to enjoy special advantages in interpersonal relations out of an entrenched sense of entitlement that immunizes him against the complaints of other people.

Nunberg:

*Asshole* launches its attack from the ground level, in the name of ordinary Joes, people whose moral authority derives not from their rank or breeding but from their authenticity, which is exactly the thing that the asshole lacks. Inauthenticity is implicit whenever we speak of a "sense of entitlement," another phrase that entered the American idiom around the time *asshole* did. ... The connection is intrinsic to the idea of the asshole, who imagines that his role or status gives him privileges that aren't really his to claim. ... The asshole's obtuseness makes him incapable of separating his sense of who he is or what he does or what he has or what he knows, which is what it means to be inauthentic.

As general summary, these definitions are difficult to argue with. One might, in fact, wonder whether these books are strictly necessary, given that we all pretty much know what makes an asshole an asshole. But both works are enjoyable in their own right; those more interested in language will take more away from Nunberg, who is the livelier of the two writers, while seekers of philosophical meaning will find much to ponder with Jones. More importantly, they make us confront a crucial question, which, I believe, we ask ourselves all too infrequently: How much of an asshole am I?

Discard for the moment the idea of political assholism (although I would be remiss if I did not mention Nunberg's flawless observation about how much of it these days is predicated on the joy the political asshole and his adherents take in the assumption that they are infuriating their opposites through their assholishness). Forget those times you have been unpleasant to a customer service representative (no matter how convinced you were that you were completely in the right). Let's dispense with that day when, mid-commute, you buried your face deep in the newspaper and read the same sentence over and over rather than acknowledge the human being in front of you in desperate need. Instead, if you dare, allow yourself to summon up a Big Cringe.

It shouldn't be hard to do. After all, it's a memory that comes rushing unbidden to the forefront of your consciousness at the most inopportune of moments and prevents you from doing anything else but acknowledging the fact that, in whatever horrible situation you are now being forced to recall, you were an asshole. For those of us who are assholes by habit rather than circumstance, there's a vast storeroom of these experiences with which to grapple; the only bit of novelty on these occasions is discovering which random selection your bastard brain has

chosen to bring forth. You may have been a drunk asshole, you may have been an insensitive asshole, you may even have been an accidental asshole, but there is no getting around it: You were an asshole.

I offer you my most sincere sympathies. Though I am an unrepentant asshole, that doesn't mean I am somehow immune to the cringe. Indeed, sometimes I spend my entire day in a near-catatonic state of shame and regret. What I mean by unrepentant is that I *continue* to be an asshole, I don't take proper steps to prevent being an asshole in the future, and sometimes I am actually aware that I am being an asshole *in the exact moment that I am being an asshole*. I have spent more time than I care to remember explaining why "gender essentialism" is a theory absurd in its very conception to women who have spent years studying—and living by—the ideals of feminism. After a friend lost a not-insubstantial amount of money on a risky but tenable proposition, I passed the better part of a week forwarding him various spam come-ons, with the subject line: FW: Investment Opportunity! Naturally, I cc'd a large group of our acquaintances in such a jovial manner that it seemed churlish for the mockee, surely heartsick, to call me out. I once went three hours listening to someone very close to me describe, in choked-up detail, the end of a relationship that had lasted six years, which coincided with her being laid off from her job. When she finally dried her eyes and asked how things were on my end, all I had to say was, "Oh, same old, same old."

In short, my bloated sense of entitlement will overcome my massive collection of insecurities every single time. Yes, I am that kind of asshole. You know someone like me. You are inexplicably friends with someone like me. Perhaps you have, on one or two regrettable occasions, been someone like me.

For we are all the asshole every now and again. It's just a question of degree. For an asshole of my caliber, there is, I am sorry to say, no chance for redemption. (The fact that I am actually claiming superiority in the arena of assholery proves, I think, what an asshole I actually am.) But the beauty of these two light-hearted yet thought-provoking books is that they identify the characteristics that make us, however involuntarily, assholes. Our capacity for love and compassion—the better angels of our nature, as it were—is what we like to think makes us special as a species, but without the other side of that coin, we would, in fact, be only angels. It is being an asshole that rounds out the whole flawed condition of our existence. It also keeps things interesting.

Still, let me offer this: If you know you've been an asshole, you're actually less of an asshole than you think you are. Whatever terrible torments you recall with fingers pressed fiercely to your face, the very act of acknowledgment means there's more good in you than you really comprehend. Unless you're a total dick, in which case no book is ever going to help.

***Ascent of the A-Word: Assholism, the First Sixty Years* by Geoffrey Nunberg. PublicAffairs,**  
[http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/1610391756/ref=as\\_li\\_ss\\_tl?ie=UTF8&camp=1789&creative=390957&creativeASIN=1610391756&linkCode=as2&tag=slatmaga-20](http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/1610391756/ref=as_li_ss_tl?ie=UTF8&camp=1789&creative=390957&creativeASIN=1610391756&linkCode=as2&tag=slatmaga-20).

***Assholes: A Theory* by Aaron James. Doubleday,**  
[http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/0385535651/ref=as\\_li\\_ss\\_tl?ie=UTF8&camp=1789&creative=390957&creativeASIN=0385535651&linkCode=as2&tag=slatmaga-20](http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/0385535651/ref=as_li_ss_tl?ie=UTF8&camp=1789&creative=390957&creativeASIN=0385535651&linkCode=as2&tag=slatmaga-20).



20121005-01	08:59	Lianne	"President Obama's Take on Last Night's Debate (You're Going to LOVE This)"
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Well worth reading...

"President Obama's Take on Last Night's Debate (You're Going to LOVE This)" by Eclectablog

Oct. 4, 2012, (<http://www.eclectablog.com/2012/10/president-obamas-take-on-last-nights-debate-youre-going-to-love-this.html>)

Who are you and what did you do with Mitt Romney???

UPDATE: My response to all of you hand-wringers that are convinced President Obama was a big loser at the debate is [HERE](#). Go. Read it.

President Obama got back on the campaign trail today in Denver and it's clear that (a) he's not the least bit deflated by last night's debate and (b) Mitt Romney's massive shift in several positions has not escaped him in the least.

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

Before I get to the video and transcript, I wanted to say a couple of things. First, on a conference call with media today, David Axelrod was asked why President Obama didn't push back against Mitt Romney's copious lies. His answer was basically that President Obama was there to talk to the American people and, had he spent his entire time refuting and debunking Romney's lies, misstatements and newfound positions on a number of issues, he never would have had the chance to talk about his own positions.

Related to that, I read an fascinating piece at Daily Kos this afternoon that I commend your attention to. It's called "Romney Won Using a Debate Technique Called the Gish Gallop". Here's a snippet:

As fact checkers busily highlight the myriad number of lies and distortions offered by Mitt-Etch-A-Sketch-Romney during last night's debate, and the spinners spin their polls with impunity, I find it interesting that the debate tactic itself has not yet been discussed nor properly analyzed. In fact, the lies and distortions offered by Romney in last night's debate are the very ESSENCE of his tactic — and is therefore quite pertinent to the discussion. Romney used a debate tactic known as the Gish Gallop.

Here's what Wikipedia says about the Gish Gallop:

[Duane] Gish has been characterized as using a rapid-fire approach during a debate, presenting arguments and changing topics very quickly. Eugenie Scott, executive director of the National Center for Science Education, has dubbed this approach the "Gish Gallop," describing it as "where the creationist is allowed to run on for 45 minutes or an hour, spewing forth torrents of error that the evolutionist hasn't a prayer of refuting in the format of a debate" and criticized Gish for failing to answer objections raised by his opponents.

This is what Mitt Romney did to a tee last night. He spewed so many untruths that there was simply no way President Obama could have refuted even some of them and still get out his message.

Anyway, here's a bit of his speech from Denver today. The transcript is below.

OBAMA: Now, the reason I was in Denver obviously is to see all of you, and it's always pretty, but we also had our first debate last night. And when I got on to the stage, I met this very spirited fellow who claimed to be Mitt Romney. But it couldn't have been Mitt Romney because the real Mitt Romney has been running around the country for the last year promising \$5 trillion in tax cuts that favor the wealthy. The fellow on stage last night said he didn't know anything about that.

The real Mitt Romney said we don't need any more teachers in our classrooms, but -don't boo, vote – but the fellow on stage last night, he loves teachers, can't get enough of them.

The Mitt Romney we all know invested in companies that were called pioneers of outsourcing jobs to other countries, but the guy on stage last night, he said that he doesn't even know that there are such laws that encourage outsourcing. He's never heard of them. Never heard of them. Never heard of tax breaks for companies who ship jobs overseas. He said that if it's true, he must need a new accountant.

Now, we know for sure it was not the real Mitt Romney because he seems to be doing just fine with his current accountant. So you see, the man on stage last night, he does not want to be held accountable for their real Mitt Romney's decisions and what he's been saying for the last year and that's because he knows full well that we don't want what he's been selling for the last year.

So Governor Romney may dance around his positions, but if you want to be president, you owe the American people the truth. So here's the truth – Governor Romney cannot pay for his \$5 trillion tax plan without blowing up the deficit or sticking it to the middle class. That's the math.

We can't afford to go down that road again.

We can't afford another round of budget-busting tax cuts for the wealthy.

We can't afford to gut out investments in education or clean energy or research and technology.

We can't afford to roll back regulations on Wall Street or on big oil companies or insurance companies.

We cannot afford to double down on the same top-down economic policies that got us into this mess.

That is not a plan to create jobs, that is not a plan to grow the economy, that is not change, that is a relapse. We don't want to go back there. We've tried it, it didn't work and we are not going back, we are going forward.

Now, I've got a different view about how we create jobs and prosperity. This country doesn't succeed when we only see the rich getting richer. We succeed when the middle class gets bigger. We grow our economy not from the top down, but from the middle out. We don't believe that anybody's entitled to success in this country, but we do believe in something called opportunity. We believe in a country where hard work pays off and where responsibility is rewarded and everybody's getting a fair shot and everybody's doing their fair share and everybody plays by the same rules. That's the country we believe in. That's what I'm fighting for, that's why I'm running for a second term as President of the United States, and that's why I want your vote.

AUDIENCE: Four more years!

OBAMA: What I talked about last night was a new economic patriotism, a patriotism that's rooted in the belief that growing our economy begins with a strong, thriving middle class. That means we export more jobs and we outsource – export more products and outsource fewer jobs.

You know, over the last three years we came together to reinvent a dying auto industry that's back on top of the world. We've created more than half a million new manufacturing jobs. And so now you've got a choice. We can keep giving tax breaks to corporations that ship jobs overseas, or we can start rewarding companies that are opening new plants and training new workers and creating jobs right here in the United States of America. That's what we're looking for.

We can help big factories and small businesses double their exports and create a million new manufacturing jobs over the next four years. You can make that happen.

I want to control more of our own energy. You know, after 30 years of inaction, we raised fuel standards so that by the middle of the next decade, your cars and trucks will be going twice as far on a gallon of gas. We've doubled the amount of renewable energy we generate from sources like wind and solar, and thousands of Americans have jobs

today building wind turbines and long-lasting batteries. The United States of America today is less dependent on foreign oil than any time in the last two decades. So now you've got a choice between a plant that reverses this progress or one that builds on it.

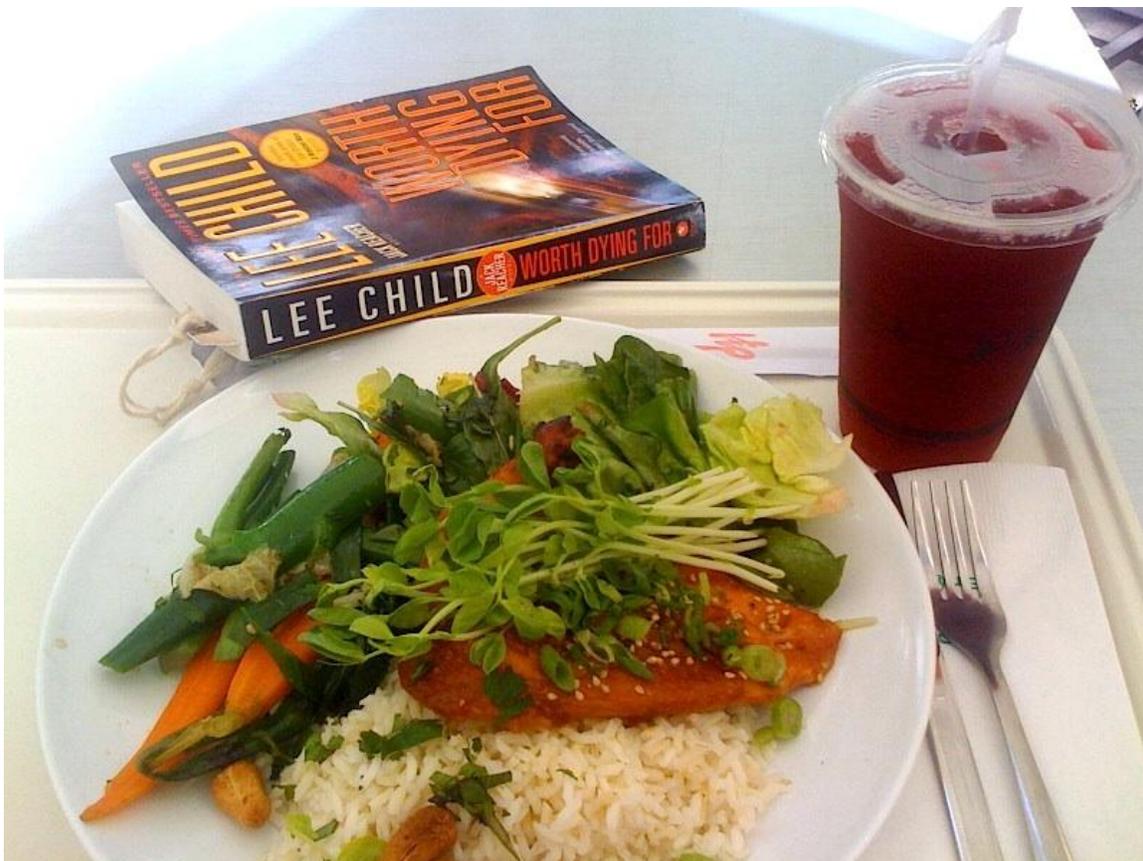
You know, last night my opponent says he refuses to close the loophole that gives big oil companies \$4 billion in taxpayer subsidies every year. Now, we've got a better plan where we keep investing in wind and solar and clean coal and the good jobs that come with them, where farmers and scientists harness new biofuels to power our cars and our trucks, where construction workers are retrofitting homes and factories so they waste less energy, and we can develop a hundred-year supply of natural gas that creates hundreds of thousands of jobs and, by the way, we can cut our oil imports in half by 2020. That will be good for our economy, that will be good for our environment, that will be good for Colorado, that will be good for America, that's what we're fighting for, that's why I'm running for a second term as President of the United States.

20121005-02 14:45 Ben Photo: Today's Poultry Lunch at Apple

### Friday's Fine Lunch... I Chickened Out

With this yummy 'Airline' sweet soy roasted chicken breast with Asian-style salad and white rice. Tasty, well-balanced, and lovely on the plate, accessorized with hibiscus lemonade.

Busy, so no lurid descriptions today:



Sweet Soy Roasted Airline Chicken

This getting very ugly

[Source of original email unknown. –SteveB]

Don't know what's true here, but interesting and a little scary

Remember when we were told to watch Fox News on a Sunday night that was going to air something about Obama and we watched but never saw anything? Well, read below and click on the video to see why it got pulled before it could air.

**[Is this what happens on the Right??? They are "TOLD" what to watch??? –SteveB]**

Now we know why Fox News never broadcast it as they had originally planned to. This piece was pulled.

I encourage you to please send this to everyone on your email list ASAP.

Remember all the notices we kept getting to watch Fox News on Sunday at 9PM? What Happened?

This is the clip that got pulled due to pressure from the Administration.

Obama Puts Heat on Fox News to Prevent Sean Hannity from airing this piece.

This is a video that Sean Hannity of FOX News has been trying to show that we are told has consistently been blocked by the Obama Administration for several weeks. It was a matter of time until the internet picked it up.

Watch it now before it gets pulled from the internet!

Video: [http://www.youtube.com/watch\\_popup?v=tCAffMSWSzY#t=28](http://www.youtube.com/watch_popup?v=tCAffMSWSzY#t=28).



"Men of Principle' and the Lost Art of Compromise" by David M. Abshire and Christopher O. Howard, Real Clear Politics

Oct. 6, 2012,

([http://www.realclearpolitics.com/articles/2012/10/06/men\\_of\\_principle\\_and\\_the\\_lost\\_art\\_of\\_compromise\\_115646.html?google\\_editors\\_picks=true](http://www.realclearpolitics.com/articles/2012/10/06/men_of_principle_and_the_lost_art_of_compromise_115646.html?google_editors_picks=true))

"I won't compromise on my principles!" -- it's the battle cry of the modern congressional candidate. It also reduces campaigns to fights over which principles will not be compromised and produces a Congress where there is agreement on just two things:

1. "Even though voters don't like Congress, they like me."
2. "That's because I don't compromise on my principles."

Many incumbent and newly minted members will explain their stance on matters of principle by wrapping themselves in the mantle of the Constitution. They will say, "The Founders were men of principle" and "Men of principle do not compromise!" Whether the issue is taxes, abortion rights, the role of government, or the sanctity of entitlement programs, Congress is full of people who seem to believe that "never compromise" is the right approach to American governance.

The phrase "never compromise" has produced an unprecedented level of party discipline on both sides of the aisle, always in the name of principle, often in the name of the Founding Fathers. That's ironic, since the Founders saw parties as pernicious and explicitly rejected parliamentary democracy. In an effort to keep the business of national

government from being outsourced to parochial party caucuses, they opted for representation of people and places over parties and philosophies. And they compromised.

The Constitutional Convention was a 3½-month-long exercise in compromise. The Constitution itself is one big compromise comprising a myriad of smaller ones. In the end, the Founders signed it because George Washington and Benjamin Franklin convinced them that compromise was the best outcome possible -- a win for everyone and a win for the nation.

The Founders were warriors for their cause, but whenever possible, civility was their martial art of choice -- respect, collaboration, and compromise over a saber, musket, and cannon. That's why the Founders would find the claim that "politics is about winning, not about compromise" to be a false choice. Politics is about winning, but compromise is how you win.

The art of compromise is in identifying points of value differentiation and arbitrating them. Rejecting compromise is not about winning, it is about making sure the other side loses. Properly executed, compromise produces victory for everyone and no losers. The Founders understood that losers foment conflict and instability. That's why they created a system that mandates government by compromise. The House of Representatives must be able to compromise with the Senate; the Congress must be able to compromise with the executive branch; even the "United States" must be able to compromise with the "several States." Without compromise, the system does not work.

But what about principle? What about commitments to the voters not to raise taxes or to protect entitlements no matter what? Those are matters of policy and politics and it is dangerous to conflate them with principle. The one true principle of American government -- the principle every member of Congress swears an oath NOT to compromise on -- is the Constitution itself:

Article VI (paragraph 3): "The Senators and Representatives before mentioned...shall be bound by Oath or Affirmation, to support this Constitution."

What about the claim that refusing to compromise is a Constitutional obligation implied by the enumerated powers of Article I, Section 8? That is a logical fallacy. Excusing intransigence by claiming to defend one specific provision undermines the Constitution as a whole. Members of Congress cannot be "cafeteria constitutionalists." The Constitution is a complex weave of compromises; pull out one thread and it all unravels.

**Supporting the Constitution means supporting the system of government it establishes, otherwise the Constitution has no meaning. Supporting the system of government means keeping it functioning, otherwise it serves no purpose. Keeping it functioning means compromising. If that means breaking some other pledge to voters, so be it. Having the character to make such choices, and the courage to explain them to the voters, is what it really means to be a leader of principle.**

(David M. Abshire and Christopher O. Howard are president and senior adviser, respectively, of the Center for the Study of the Presidency and Congress.)

20121007-02	23:45	SteveB	"Hugo Chavez Celebrates Re-Election in Venezuela"
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The worst news of 2012, so far...

"Hugo Chavez Celebrates Re-Election in Venezuela" by the BBC

Oct. 8, 2012, (<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-latin-america-19867445>)

Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez has hailed a "perfect victory", after defeating Henrique Capriles to secure a fourth term in office.

Mr. Chavez won 54% of the vote, the electoral council announced, with turnout at about 81%.

Brandishing a replica of the sword of independence hero Simon Bolivar, he pledged Venezuela would continue its "march towards democratic socialism".

But he also vowed to engage opponents and to be a "better president".

Noisy celebrations among Chavez supporters erupted across the capital, Caracas, following the announcement of the result.

Mr. Chavez addressed them from the balcony of the presidential palace:

I promise you I'll be a better president. Truthfully, this has been the perfect battle, a democratic battle. Venezuela will continue its march toward the democratic socialism of the 21st century.

But Mr. Chavez also accepted that there had been a significant opposition vote, reducing his victory margin from 27 points in 2006 to just 10 points over Mr. Capriles.

Almost all of the votes have now been counted, with Mr. Chavez securing 54.66% to Mr. Capriles' 44.73%.

Mr. Chavez said: "I extend from here my recognition of all who voted against us, recognition of their democratic weight."

He praised the opposition for recognising the election result, and said he was "stretching out my hands and heart on our behalf because we are brothers in Bolivar's homeland".

He also invited to dialogue all those he said were "sowing hatred and social venom".

Mr. Chavez recognised his new government would need "to respond with greater efficacy and efficiency to the needs of our people", adding: "I promise you I'll be a better president."

Jubilant Chavez supporters held impromptu street parties in central Caracas, blaring horns and waving flags.

"I'm celebrating with a big heart - Chavez is the hope of the people and of Latin America," said Chavez supporter Mary Reina.

Construction worker Edgar Gonzalez said: "I can't describe the relief and happiness I feel right now.

"The revolution will continue, thanks to God and the people of this great country."

At the Capriles' campaign headquarters, some opposition supporters were in tears at the news.

Mr. Capriles congratulated Mr. Chavez but told opposition supporters not to feel defeated.

"I want to congratulate the candidate, the president of the republic," he said at his campaign headquarters.

He added: "We have planted many seeds across Venezuela and I know that these seeds are going to produce many trees. I will continue working to build one country."

Mr. Capriles said he hoped Mr. Chavez would recognise that almost half the country disagreed with his policies.

Mr. Capriles said: "There's a country that is divided and to be a good president means to work for all Venezuelans, to work for the solution of all Venezuelans' problems."

Mr. Chavez, 58, was diagnosed with cancer last year but says he is now fully recovered.

He has been in power since 1999 and has nationalised key sectors of the economy.

Venezuela is a major oil producer and high oil prices have allowed his government to fund healthcare, education programmes and social housing.

In his campaign, Mr. Capriles, who headed a coalition of 30 opposition parties, said the president's policies had led to bureaucracy, inefficiency and shortages.

Analysts say Mr. Chavez's victory will be welcomed by several countries in the region - including Cuba and Nicaragua - that benefit from his Petrocaribe scheme which provides Venezuelan oil at preferential rates.

He also has strong ties to Argentine President Cristina Fernandez de Kirchner, backing Argentina's sovereignty dispute with Britain over the Falkland Islands.

After the election result was announced, President Fernandez tweeted: "Your victory is our victory! And the victory of South America and the Caribbean!"

President Chavez's new six-year term will begin on 10 January.

20121007-03 23:59 SteveB Photo: Sucre, Bolivia

[http://famouswonders.com/page/33/?attachment\\_id=thcuimiwr](http://famouswonders.com/page/33/?attachment_id=thcuimiwr)



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

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<http://www.FriendsOfTheMiddle.org>  
[FriendsOfTheMiddle@hotmail.com](mailto:FriendsOfTheMiddle@hotmail.com)

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# FRIENDS OF THE MIDDLE NEWSLETTER #243 — OCT. 9, 2012

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

**INDEX: Click here.**

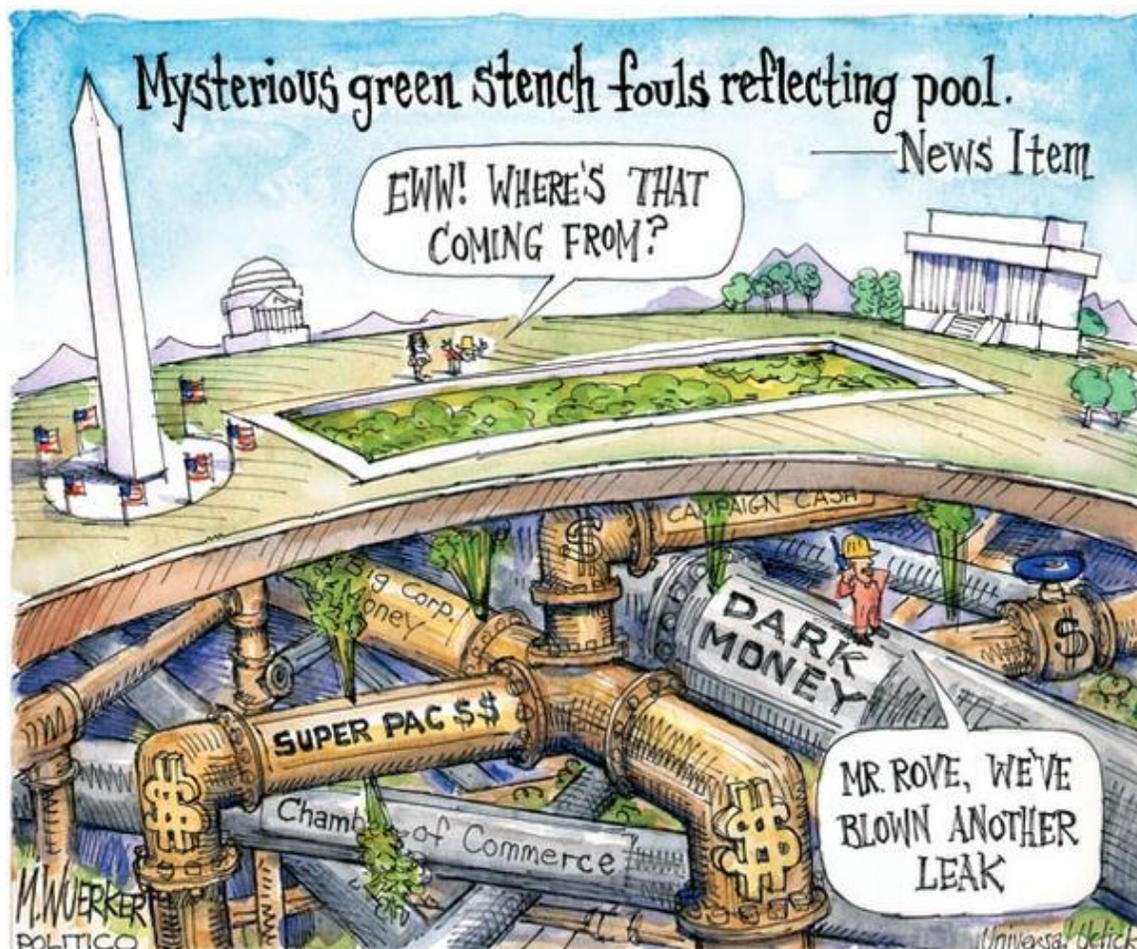
## **Money Problems**

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

Our entire election process stinks to high heaven. No wonder U.S. voter turnout is so incredibly low...

"The Illegal Donor Loophole" by Peter Schweizer and Peter J. Boyer, The Daily Beast

Oct. 8, 2012, (<http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2012/10/08/the-illegal-donor-loophole.html>)



(The giant gap in our campaign-finance system that makes foreign and fraudulent donations possible.)

There has been no shortage of media attention paid to the role of money in the current presidential contest. Super PACs, bundlers, 527s, and mega-donors have attracted abundant notice. But there has been surprisingly little focus on perhaps the most secretive and influential financial force in politics today: the wide-open coffers of the Internet.

With millions of online campaign donations ricocheting through cyberspace, one might think the Federal Election Commission would have erected serious walls to guard federal elections from foreign or fraudulent Internet contributions. But that's far from true. In fact, campaigns are largely expected to police these matters themselves.

There's certainly ample historical reason to worry about foreign donations: in the 1990s, for instance, there were allegations that Chinese officials had funneled money into U.S. campaigns.

The solicitation of campaign donations from foreign nationals is prohibited by the Federal Election Campaign Act. But that law, passed in the 1970s, did not anticipate the Internet, or the creative uses that can be made of such social media as Facebook.

Campaigns that aggressively raise money online are soliciting donations from people around the world—whether they intend to or not. People repost campaign solicitations on blogs that send them sprawling around the globe like digital kudzu. For example, an Obama campaign official posting ended up on Arabic Facebook, complete with a hyperlink to a donation page. In another instance, someone posted videos on Latin American websites featuring Sen. Marco Rubio, and included embedded advertisements asking for campaign donations.

In addition, people around the world are being asked for donations by the campaigns themselves, simply because they signed up for information on campaign websites. The problem: candidate webpages don't ask visitors from foreign IP addresses to enter a military ID or passport number. Instead, the websites use auto-responder email systems that simply gather up email addresses and automatically spit out solicitations.

Campaigns should be required to ask people signing up for campaign information whether they are able to legally donate.

The FEC, meanwhile, has taken the position that this sort of passive internet solicitation is not illegal, because the campaigns, presumably, are not intentionally targeting foreign nationals with their online money pleas.

Further complicating the issue are websites like Obama.com—which is owned not by the Obama campaign but by Robert Roche, an American businessman and Obama fundraiser who lives in Shanghai. Roche's China-based media company, Acorn International, runs infomercials on Chinese state television. Obama.com redirects to a specific donation page on BarackObama.com, the official campaign website. Unlike BarackObama.com, Obama.com's traffic is 68 percent foreign, according to markosweb.com, a traffic-analysis website. According to France-based web analytics site Mustat.com, Obama.com receives over 2,000 visitors every day.

The name Robert W. Roche appears 11 times in the White House visitors log during the Obama administration. Roche also sits on the Obama administration's Advisory Committee for Trade Policy and Negotiations, and is a co-chair of Technology for Obama, a fundraising effort. (In an email exchange, Roche declined to discuss his website, or his support for the Obama reelection effort, referring the inquiries to the Obama campaign team. The Obama campaign, in turn, says it has no control over Roche's website; it also says only 2 percent of the donations associated with Obama.com come from overseas.)

But it isn't just foreign donations that are a concern. So are fraudulent donations. In the age of digital contributions, fraudsters can deploy so-called robo-donations, computer programs that use false names to spew hundreds of donations a day in small increments, in order to evade reporting requirements. According to an October 2008 *Washington Post* article, Mary Biskup of Missouri appeared to give more than \$170,000 in small donations to the 2008 Obama campaign. Yet Biskup said she never gave any money to the campaign. Some other contributor gave the donations using her name, without her knowledge. (The Obama campaign explained to the *Post* that it caught the donations and returned them.)

This makes it all the more surprising that the Obama campaign does not use a standard security tool, the card verification value (CVV) system—the three- or four-digit number often imprinted on the back of a credit card, whose purpose is to verify that the person executing the purchase (or, in this case, donation) physically possesses the card. The Romney campaign, by contrast, does use the CVV—as has almost every other candidate who has run for president in recent years, from Hillary Clinton in 2008 to Ron Paul this year. (The Obama campaign says it doesn't use the CVV because it can be an inhibiting factor for some small donors.) Interestingly, the Obama campaign's online store requires the CVV to purchase items like hats or hoodies (the campaign points out that its merchandise vendor requires the tool).

We also focused on the Obama campaign because it is far more successful than Romney when it comes to small donors—which the Internet greatly helps to facilitate. In September the Obama campaign brought in its biggest fundraising haul—\$181 million. Nearly all of that amount (98 percent) came from small donations, through 1.8 million transactions.

The Obama campaign says that it is rigorous in its self-regulation effort. "We take great care to make sure that every one of our more than three million donors are eligible to donate and that our fundraising efforts fully comply with all U.S. laws and regulations," says campaign spokesman Adam Fetcher. Campaign officials say they use multiple security tools to screen all online credit-card contributions, and then review, by hand, those donations that are flagged by their automated system. Potentially improper donations, such as those originating from foreign Internet addresses, are returned to any donors who cannot provide a copy of their current U.S. passport photo pages, the campaign says.

But the weakness of the current system isn't particular to any campaign. It's a broad reliance on self-policing combined with a lack of transparency. Foreign or fraudulent donations might be less of a concern if it were possible for outsiders—the press, the public, good government watchdog groups, or the Federal Election Commission—to independently determine whether they were taking place. But it isn't. Candidates need only publicly report campaign contributions over \$200. For donations between \$50 and \$200 (the average donation in Obama's huge September haul was \$53), candidates are simply required to make an effort to obtain accurate identifying information—information they aren't required to report. And for donations under \$50, regulations don't even require campaigns to keep a record of identifying information.

The FEC, to be sure, does occasionally conduct investigations into foreign or fraudulent donations. But the majority of these investigations only result in civil fines or closure without action. There is much more that could be done to remedy this situation. First, campaigns should be required to disclose identifying information on all their donors, not just those who give over \$200. Second, campaigns should be required to ask for the CVV number when accepting donations. Finally, campaigns should be required to ask people signing up for campaign information whether they are able to legally donate. There is simply no reason non-Americans should be solicited for donations via email.

Until such measures are enacted, however, the integrity of our campaign-donation system will remain mostly in the hands of political consultants and campaign managers. Is that wise?

For more on the subject, see this new report from Peter Schweizer's Government Accountability Institute:

<http://www.campaignfundingrisks.com/full-report>.

20121008-01	05:55	Tom	Fw: Video: Obama's Second Term Tax Plans (by Dick Morris TV)
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Video: [http://www.youtube.com/watch\\_popup?v=-wIfI2whjiM](http://www.youtube.com/watch_popup?v=-wIfI2whjiM).

[Source of original email unknown. –SteveB]

The Obama tax plan? Were you aware?

Would Dick Morris put his reputation on line based on something he was not sure of? Probably not.

What bothers me most about this, is the audacity of the Obama to claim that he is not going to raise taxes for the middle class. Not many of us make even \$150K a year, but most of us would like to and know that we would get to keep some of it, and not give it over to bureaucrats over whom we have no control, to redistribute. And do you think they would do it efficiently? While it is on my mind, I will reiterate that hiring the IRS to monitor the collection of 'taxes' to support Obamacare doesn't sit well with me either.

This is the man that helped get Clinton elected President twice, and Governor of AR three times. You should watch this video... this is not a "phony."

This is Dick Morris who used to work for the Clinton administration, he is a respected news contributor and author. He knows what he is talking about. He investigates before reporting.

Democrat, Independent, Republican, Undecided, this is going to affect everyone!

<a href="#">20121008-02</a>	06:43	Tom	"6 Ridiculous Lies You Believe About the Founding of America"
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"6 Ridiculous Lies You Believe About the Founding of America" by Jack O'Brien and Elford Alley, *Cracked*

May 15, 2012, ([http://www.cracked.com/article\\_19864\\_6-ridiculous-lies-you-believe-about-founding-america.html](http://www.cracked.com/article_19864_6-ridiculous-lies-you-believe-about-founding-america.html))

When it comes to the birth of America, most of us are working from a stew of elementary school history lessons, Westerns and vague Thanksgiving mythology. And while it's not surprising those sources might biff a couple details, what's shocking is how much less interesting the version we learned was. It turns out our teachers, Hollywood and whoever we got our Thanksgiving mythology from (Big Turkey?) all made America's origin story far more boring than it actually was for some very disturbing reasons. For instance...

## **#6. The Indians Weren't Defeated by White Settlers**

### The Myth:

Our history books don't really go into a ton of detail about how the Indians became an endangered species. Some warring, some smallpox blankets and...death by broken heart?

When American Indians show up in movies made by conscientious white people like Oliver Stone, they usually lament having their land taken from them. The implication is that Native Americans died off like a species of tree-burrowing owl that couldn't hack it once their natural habitat was paved over.

But if we had to put the whole Cowboys and Indians battle in a Hollywood log line, we'd say the Indians put up a good fight, but were no match for the white man's superior technology. As surely as scissors cuts paper and rock smashes scissors, gun beats arrow. That's just how it works.

### The Truth:

There's a pretty important detail our movies and textbooks left out of the handoff from Native Americans to white European settlers: It begins in the immediate aftermath of a full-blown apocalypse. In the decades between Columbus' discovery of America and the Mayflower landing at Plymouth Rock, the most devastating plague in human history raced up the East Coast of America. Just two years before the pilgrims started the tape recorder on New England's written history, the plague wiped out about 96 percent of the Indians in Massachusetts.

In the years before the plague turned America into The Stand, a sailor named Giovanni da Verrazzano sailed up the East Coast and described it as "densely populated" and so "smoky with Indian bonfires" that you could smell them

burning hundreds of miles out at sea. Using your history books to understand what America was like in the 100 years after Columbus landed there is like trying to understand what modern day Manhattan is like based on the post-apocalyptic scenes from I Am Legend.

Historians estimate that before the plague, America's population was anywhere between 20 and 100 million (Europe's at the time was 70 million). The plague would eventually sweep West, killing at least 90 percent of the native population. For comparison's sake, the Black Plague killed off between 30 and 60 percent of Europe's population.

While this all might seem like some heavy shit to lay on a bunch of second graders, your high school and college history books weren't exactly in a hurry to tell you the full story. Which is strange, because many historians believe it is the single most important event in American history. But it's just more fun to believe that your ancestors won the land by being the superior culture.

European settlers had a hard enough time defeating the *Mad Max*-style stragglers of the once huge Native American population, even with superior technology. You have to assume that the Native Americans at full strength would have made shit powerfully real for any pale faces trying to settle the country they had already settled. Of course, we don't really need to assume anything about how real the American Indians kept it, thanks to the many people who came before the pilgrims. For instance, if you liked playing cowboys and Indians as a kid, you should know that you could have been playing Vikings and Indians, because that shit actually happened. But before we get to how they kicked Viking ass, you probably need to know that...

## **5. Native Culture Wasn't Primitive**

### The Myth:

American Indians lived in balance with mother earth, father moon, brother coyote and sister...bear? Does that just sound right because of the Berenstain Bears? Whichever animal they thought was their sister, the point is, the Indians were leaving behind a small carbon footprint before elements were wearing shoes. If the government was taken over by hippies tomorrow, the directionless, ecologically friendly society they'd institute is about what we picture the Native Americans as having lived like.

### The Truth:

The Indians were so good at killing trees that a team of Stanford environmental scientists think they caused a mini ice age in Europe. When all of the tree-clearing Indians died in the plague, so many trees grew back that it had a reverse global warming effect. More carbon dioxide was sucked from the air, the Earth's atmosphere held on to less heat, and Al Gore cried a single tear of joy.

One of the best examples of how we got Native Americans all wrong is Cahokia, a massive Native American city located in modern day East St. Louis. In 1250, it was bigger than London, and featured a sophisticated society with an urban center, satellite villages and thatched-roof houses lining the central plazas. While the city was abandoned by the time white people got to it, the evidence they left behind suggests a complex economy with trade routes from the Great Lakes all the way down to the Gulf of Mexico.

And that's not even mentioning America's version of the Great Pyramid: Monk's Mound. You know how people treat the very existence of the Great Pyramid in Egypt as one of history's most confounding mysteries? Well, Cahokia's pyramid dwarfs that one, both in size and in degree of difficulty. The mound contains more than 2.16 billion pounds of soil, some of which had to be carried from hundreds of miles away, to make sure the city's giant monument was vividly colored. To put that in perspective, all 13 million people who live in the state of Illinois today would have to carry three 50-pound baskets of soil from as far away as Indiana to construct another one.

So why does Egypt get millions of dollars of tourism and *Time Life* documentaries dedicated to their boring old sand pyramids, while you didn't even know about the giant blue, red, white, black, gray, brown and orange testament to engineering and human willpower just outside of St. Louis? Well, because the Egyptians know how to treat one of

the Eight Wonders of the World. America, on the other hand, appears to be trying to figure out how to turn it into a parking lot.

In the realm of personal hygiene, the Europeans out-hipped the Indians by a foul smelling mile. Europeans at the time thought baths attracted the black humors, or some such bullshit, because they never washed and were amazed by the Indians' interest in personal cleanliness. The natives, for their part, viewed Europeans as "just plain smelly" according to first hand records.

The Native Americans didn't hate Europeans just for the clouds of shit-smelling awfulness they dragged around behind them. Missionaries met Indians who thought Europeans were "physically weak, sexually untrustworthy, atrociously ugly" and "possessed little intelligence in comparison to themselves." The Europeans didn't do much to debunk the comparison in the physical beauty department. Verrazzano, the sailor who witnessed the densely populated East Coast, called a native who boarded his ship "as beautiful in stature and build as I can possibly describe," before presumably adding, "you know, for a dude." This man-crush wasn't an isolated incident. British fisherman William Wood described the Indians in New England as "more amiable to behold, though dressed only in Adam's finery, than...an English dandy in the newest fashion." Or, with the bullshit removed, "Better looking than any of us, and they're not even fucking trying."

OK, now that we got that out of the way, we can tell you about the historical slash-fiction your history teacher forgot to tell you actually freaking happened.

#### **4. Columbus Didn't Discover America: Vikings vs. Indians**

##### The Myth:

America was discovered in 1492 because Europeans were starting to get curious about the outside world thanks to the Renaissance and Enlightenment and Europeans of the time just generally being the first smart people ever. Columbus named the people who already lived there Indians, presumably because he was being charmingly self-deprecating.

##### The Truth:

Here's what we know. A bunch of Vikings set up a successful colony in Greenland that lasted for 518 years (982-1500). To put that into perspective, the white European settlement currently known as the United States will need to wait until the year 2125 to match that longevity. The Vikings spent a good portion of that time sending expeditions down south to try to settle what they called Vineland -- which historians now believe was the East Coast of North America. Some place the Vikings as far south as modern day North Carolina.

After spending a couple decades sneaking ashore to raid Vineland of its ample wood pulp, the Vikings made a go of settling North America in 1005. After landing there with livestock, supplies and between 100 and 300 settlers, they set up the first successful European American colony...for two years. And then the Native Americans kicked their ass out of the country, shooting the head Viking in the heart with an arrow.

So to recap, the Vikings discovered America. They were camping off the coast of America, and had every reason to settle America for about 500 years. Despite being the biggest badass in European history, one tangle with the natives was enough to convince the Vikings that settling America wasn't worth the trouble. If you think the pilgrims would have fared any better than the Vikings against an East Coast chock-full of Native Americans, you either don't know what a Viking is or you're placing entirely too much stock in the strategic importance of having belt buckles on your shoes.

If the Indians had been at full strength in 1640, white people might still be sneaking onto the East Coast to steal wood pulp. That's as far as the Vikings got in 500 years, and they were sailing from much closer than Europe and desperately needed the resources -- the two competing theories for why the Viking settlements on Greenland eventually died out are lack of resources and getting killed by natives -- and, perhaps most importantly, *they were goddamned Vikings.*

So why did your history teachers lie? This should have been history teachers' version of dinosaurs: a mostly unknown period of violent awesomeness they nevertheless told you about because they knew it would hook every male between the ages of 5 and 12 forever.

It turns out that many of the awesomest stories had to be paved over by the bullshit you memorized in order to protect your teachers and parents from awkward conversations. Like the one about how...

### **3. Everything You Know About Columbus Is a Calculated Lie**

#### The Myth:

Columbus discovered America thanks to a daring journey across the Atlantic. His crew was about to throw him overboard when land was spotted. Even after he landed in America, Columbus didn't realize he'd discovered an entire continent because maps of America were far less reliable back then. In one of the great tragedies of history, Columbus went to his grave poor, believing he'd merely discovered India. Nobody really "got" America's potential until the pilgrims showed up and successfully settled the country for the first time. Nearly 150 years might seem like a long time between trips, but boats were really slow back in those days, and they'd just learned that the Atlantic Ocean went that far.

#### The Truth:

First of all, Columbus wasn't the first to cross the Atlantic. Nor were the Vikings. Two Native Americans landed in Holland in 60 B.C. and were promptly not given a national holiday by anyone. Columbus didn't see the enormous significance of his ability to cross the Atlantic because it wasn't especially significant. His voyage wasn't particularly difficult. They enjoyed smooth sailing, and nobody was threatening to throw him overboard. Despite what history books tell kids (and the Internet apparently believes), Columbus died wealthy, and with a pretty good idea of what he'd found -- on his third voyage to America, he wrote in his journal, "I have come to believe that this is a mighty continent which was hitherto unknown."

The myths surrounding him cover up the fact that Columbus was calculating, shrewd and as hungry for gold as the voice over guy in the Cash4Gold ads. When he couldn't find enough of the yellow stuff to make his voyage profitable, he focused on enslaving Native Americans for profit. That's how efficient Columbus was -- he discovered America and invented American slavery in the same 15-year span.

There were plenty of unsuccessful, mostly horrible attempts to settle America between Columbus' discovery and the pilgrims' arrival. We only hear these two "settling of America" stories because history books and movies aren't huge fans of what white people got up to between 1492 and 1620 in America -- mostly digging for gold and eating each other.

They also show us white Europeans being unable to easily defeat a native population that hadn't yet been ravaged by plague. It wasn't coincidence that the pilgrims settled America two years after New England was emptied of 96 percent of the Indians who lived there. According to James W. Loewen's *Lies My Teacher Told Me*, that's generally how the settling process went: The plague acted as a lead blocker for white European settlers, clearing the land of all the natives. The Europeans had superior weapons, but they also had superior guns when they tried to colonize China, India, Africa and basically every other region on the planet. When you picture Chinese or Indian or African people today, they're not white because those lands were already inhabited when the Europeans showed up. And so was America. [Just not with plague resistant natives. -SteveB]

American history goes to almost comical lengths to ignore that fact. For instance, if your reading comprehension was strong in middle school, you might remember the lost colony of Roanoke, where the people mysteriously disappeared, leaving behind only one cryptic clue: the word "Croatan" carved into the town post. As we've covered before, this is only a mystery if you are the worst detective ever. Croatan was the name of a nearby island populated by friendly Native Americans. In the years after the people of Roanoke "disappeared," genetically impossible Native Americans with gray eyes and an "astounding" familiarity with distinctly European customs began to pop up in the tribes that moved between Croatan and Roanoke islands.

## 2. White Settlers Did Not Carve America Out of the Untamed Wilderness

### The Myth:

The pilgrims were the first in a parade of brave settlers who pushed civilization westward along the frontier with elbow grease and sheer grizzled-old-man strength.

### The Truth:

In written records from early colonial times, you constantly come across "settlers" being shocked at how convenient the American wilderness made things for them. The eastern forests, generally portrayed by great American writers as a "thick, unbroken snarl of trees" no longer existed by the time the white European settlers actually showed up. The pilgrims couldn't believe their luck when they found that American forests just naturally contained "an ecological kaleidoscope of garden plots, blackberry rambles, pine barrens and spacious groves of chestnut, hickory and oak."

The puzzlingly obedient wilderness didn't stop in New England. Frontiersmen who settled what is today Ohio were psyched to find that the forest there naturally grew in a way that "resembled English parks." You could drive carriages through the untamed frontier without burning a single calorie clearing rocks, trees and shrubbery.

Whether they honestly believed they'd lucked into the 17th century equivalent of Candyland or were being willfully ignorant about how the land got so tamed, the truth about the presettled wilderness didn't make it into the official account. **It's the same reason every extraordinarily lucky CEO of the past 100 years has written a book about leadership. It's always a better idea to credit hard work and intelligence than to acknowledge that you just got luckier than any group of people has ever gotten in the history of the world.**

Nobody's role in settling America has been quite as overplayed as the Pilgrims'. Despite famous sermons with titles like "Into the Wilderness," the pilgrims cherry-picked Plymouth specifically because it was a recently abandoned town. After sailing up and down the coast of Cape Cod, they chose Plymouth Rock because of "its beautiful cleared fields, recently planted in corn, and its useful harbor."

We're always told that the pilgrims were helped by an Indian named Squanto who spoke English. How the hell did that happen? Had he taken AP English in high school? The answer to that question is the greatest story your history teachers didn't bother to teach you. Squanto was from the town that would become Plymouth, but between being born there and the pilgrims' arrival, he'd undergone an epic journey that puts Homer's *Odyssey* to shame.

Squanto had been kidnapped from Cape Cod as a child and sold into slavery in Spain. He escaped like the boy Maximus he was, and spent his better years hoofing it west until he hit the Atlantic Ocean. Deciding that swimming back to America would take too much time, he learned enough English to convince someone to let him hitch a ride to "the New World." When he finally got back home, he found his town deserted. The plague had swept through two years before, taking everyone but him with it.

When the pilgrims showed up, instead of being pissed at the people from the Continent who had stolen his ability to grow up with his family, he decided that since nobody else was using it, he might as well show them how to make his town work.

This is especially charitable of him when you realize that, while the pilgrims were nicer than past settlers, they weren't exactly sensitive to Squanto's plight. According to a pilgrim journal from the days immediately after they arrived, they raided Indian graves for "bowls, trays, dishes and things like that. We took several of the prettiest things to carry away with us, and covered the body up again." And yet Squanto taught them how to make it through a winter without turning to cannibalism -- a landmark accomplishment for the British to that point.

Compare that to Jamestown, the first successful settlement in American history. You don't know the name of the ship that landed there because the settlers antagonized the natives, just like the vikings who came before them. The Native Americans didn't have to actively kill them. They just sat back and laughed as the English spent the harvest seasons digging holes for gold. The first Virginians were so desperate without a Squanto that they went

from taking Indian slaves to offering themselves up as slaves to the Indians in exchange for food. Enough English managed to survive there to make Jamestown the oldest successful colonial settlement in America. But it's hard to turn it into a religious allegory in which white people are the good guys, so we get the pilgrims instead.

## **1. How Indians Influenced Modern America**

### The Myth:

After the natives helped the pilgrims get through that first winter, all playing nice disappeared until Dances with Wolves. Even the movies that do portray white people going native portray it as a shocking exception to the rule. Otherwise, the only influence the natives seem to have on the New World and the frontiersmen is giving them moving targets to shoot at, and eventually a plot outline for Avatar.

### The Truth:

The fake mystery of Roanoke is a pretty good key for understanding the difference between how white settlers actually felt about American Indians and how hard your history books had to ignore that reality. Settlers defecting to join native society were so common that it became a major issue for colonial leaders -- think the modern immigration debate, except with all the white people risking their lives to get out of American society. According to Loewen, "Europeans were always trying to stop the outflow. Hernando De Soto had to post guards to keep his men and women from defecting to Native societies." Pilgrims were so scared of Indian influence that they outlawed the wearing of long hair.

Ben Franklin noted that, "No European who has tasted Savage Life can afterwards bear to live in our societies." While "always bet on black" might have been sound financial advice by the time Wesley Snipes offered it, Ben Franklin knew that for much of American history, it was equally advisable to bet on red.

Franklin wasn't pointing this out as a critique of the settlers who defected -- he believed that Indian societies provided greater opportunities for happiness than European cultures -- and he wasn't the only Founding Father who thought settlers could learn a thing or two from them. They didn't dress up like Indians at the Boston Tea Party ironically. That was common protesting gear during the American revolutions.

For a hundred years after the American Revolution, none of this was a secret. Political cartoonists used Indians to represent the colonial side. Colonial soldiers dressed up like Indians when fighting the British. Documents from the time indicate that the design of the U.S. government was at least partially inspired by native tribal society. Historians think the Iroquois Confederacy had a direct influence on the U.S. Constitution, and the Senate even passed a resolution acknowledging that "the confederation of the original thirteen colonies into one republic was influenced ... by the Iroquois Confederacy, as were many of the democratic principles which were incorporated into the constitution itself."

That wasn't just Congress trying to get some Indian casino money. The colonists came from European countries that had spent most of their time as monarchies and much of their resources fighting religious wars with each other. They initially tried to set up the colonies exactly like Western Europe -- a series of small, in-fighting nations stacked on top of each other. The idea of an overarching confederacy of different independent states was completely foreign to them. Or it would have been. But as Ben Franklin noted in a letter about the failure to integrate with one another:

It would be a strange thing if six nations of ignorant savages should be capable of forming a scheme for such a union and be able to execute it in such a manner as that it has subsisted ages and appears insoluble; and yet that a like union should be impracticable for 10 or a dozen English colonies.

In 1987, Cornell University held a conference on the link between the Iroquois' government and the U.S. Constitution. It was noted that the Iroquois Great Law of Peace "includes 'freedom of speech, freedom of religion... separation of power in government and checks and balances.'"

Wow, checks and balances, freedom of speech and religion. Sounds awfully familiar.

One of the strangest legacies of America's founding is our national obsession with the apocalypse. There's a new JJ Abrams show coming this fall called "The Revolution" about a post-apocalyptic America, and of course *The Hunger Games*. We go to a gift shop in Arizona and see dug-up Indian arrowheads, and never think "this is the same thing as the stuff laying around in *Terminator* or *The Road* or that part in *The Road Warrior* where the feral kid finds a music box and doesn't know what it is."

We love the apocalypse as long as nobody acknowledges the truth: It's not a mythical event. We live on top of one.

20121008-03 08:55 MarthaH Cartoon: Have You Ever Seen One?



20121008-04 13:50 SteveB "The Maimed"

"The Maimed" by Chris Hedges, OpEdNews/Truthdig

Oct. 8, 2012, (<http://www.opednews.com/articles/The-Maimed-by-Chris-Hedges-121008-605.html>)

(Chris Hedges gave this talk Sunday night in New York City at a protest denouncing the 11th anniversary of the war in Afghanistan. The event, at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, was led by Veterans for Peace.)

Many of us who are here carry within us death. The smell of decayed and bloated corpses. The cries of the wounded. The shrieks of children. The sound of gunfire. The deafening blasts. The fear. The stench of cordite. The humiliation that comes when you surrender to terror and beg for life. The loss of comrades and friends. And then the aftermath. The long alienation. The numbness. The nightmares. The lack of sleep. The inability to connect to all living things, even to those we love the most. The regret. The repugnant lies mouthed around us about honor and heroism and glory. The absurdity. The waste. The futility.

It is only the maimed that finally know war. And we are the maimed. We are the broken and the lame. We ask for forgiveness. We seek redemption. We carry on our backs this awful cross of death, for the essence of war is death, and the weight of it digs into our shoulders and eats away at our souls. We drag it through life, up hills and down hills, along the roads, into the most intimate recesses of our lives. It never leaves us. Those who know us best

know that there is something unspeakable and evil many of us harbor within us. This evil is intimate. It is personal. We do not speak its name. It is the evil of things done and things left undone. It is the evil of war.

We do not speak of war. War is captured only in the long, vacant stares, in the silences, in the trembling fingers, in the memories most of us keep buried deep within us, in the tears.

It is impossible to portray war. Narratives, even anti-war narratives, make the irrational rational. They make the incomprehensible comprehensible. They make the illogical logical. They make the despicable beautiful. All words and images, all discussions, all films, all evocations of war, good or bad, are an obscenity. There is nothing to say. There are only the scars and wounds. These we carry within us. These we cannot articulate. The horror. The horror.

War gives to its killers a God-like power to take life. And there are those here tonight that have felt and exercised that power. They turned other human beings into objects. And in that process of killing they became objects, machines, instruments of death, war's victimizers and war's victims. And they do not want to be machines again.

We wander through life with the deadness of war within us. There is no escape. There is no peace. We know an awful truth, an existential truth. War exposed the lies of patriotism and collective virtue of the nation that our churches, our schools, our press, our movies, our books, our government told us about ourselves, about who we were. And we see through these illusions. But those who speak this truth are cast out. Ghosts. Strangers in a strange land.

Who are our brothers and sisters? Who is our family? Whom have we become? We have become those whom we once despised and killed. We have become the enemy. Our mother is the mother grieving over her murdered child, and we murdered this child, in a mud-walled village of Afghanistan or a sand-filled cemetery in Fallujah. Our father is the father lying on a pallet in a hut, paralyzed by the blast from an iron fragmentation bomb. Our sister lives in poverty in a refugee camp outside Kabul, widowed, desperately poor, raising her children alone. Our brother, yes, our brother, is in the Taliban and the Iraqi insurgency and al-Qaida. And he has an automatic rifle. And he kills. And he is becoming us. War is always the same plague. It imparts the same deadly virus. It teaches us to deny another's humanity, worth, being, and to kill and be killed.

There are days we wish we were whole. We wish we could put down this cross. We envy those who, in their innocence, believe in the innate goodness of America and the righteousness of war and celebrate what we know is despicable. And sometimes it makes us wish for death, for the peace of it. But we know too the awful truth, as James Baldwin wrote, that "people who shut their eyes to reality simply invite their own destruction, and anyone who insists on remaining in a state of innocence long after that innocence is dead turns himself into a monster." And we would rather be maimed and broken and in pain than be a monster, and some of us, once, were monsters.

I cannot heal you. You will never be healed. I cannot take away your wounds, visible and invisible. I cannot promise that it will be better. I cannot impart to you the cheerful and childish optimism that is the curse of America. I can only tell you to stand up, to pick up your cross, to keep moving. I can only tell you that you must always defy the forces that eat away at you, at the nation -- this plague of war.

Sometimes I feel like a motherless child?  
A long ways from home  
A long ways from home

Towering about us are banks and other financial institutions that profit from war. War, for some, is a business. And across this country lies a labyrinth of military industries that produce nothing but instruments of death. And some of us once served these forces. It is death we defy, not our own death, but the vast enterprise of death. The dark, primeval lusts for power and personal wealth, the hyper-masculine language of war and patriotism, are used to justify the slaughter of the weak and the innocent and mock justice. ... And we will not use these words of war.

We cannot flee from evil. Some of us have tried through drink and drugs and self-destructiveness. Evil is always with us. It is because we know evil, our own evil, that we do not let go, do not surrender. It is because we know evil that we resist. It is because we know violence that we are nonviolent. And we know that it is not about us; war

taught us that. It is about the other, lying by the side of the road. It is about reaching down in defiance of creeds and oaths, in defiance of religion and nationality, and lifting our enemy up. All acts of healing and love -- and the defiance of war is an affirmation of love -- allow us to shout out to the vast powers of the universe that, however broken we are, we are not yet helpless, however much we despair we are not yet without hope, however weak we may feel, we will always, always, always resist. And it is in this act of resistance that we find our salvation.

20121008-05 15:01 Pam Re: FotM Newsletter #242 (reply to all)

I haven't watched the YouTube video yet, but the rest of this stuff is great. Thanks for posting all of it

20121008-06 15:23 SteveB Fw: US Action Donation Request

I know this forward is blatant appeal for your hard-earned cash...that is, if you're rich...or maybe the cash the government "redistributes" your way while you sit on your lazy ass...but I'm sure all of you agree with me that it's especially important for small donors to make their voices heard in this important manner. The masses need to keep up with the behemoth corporate donors, if they possibly can...whether via the below request or some other.

Volunteering is also important. Do what you can. The battle is on. It is titanic. It is close. Thank you!

from US Action:

You watched the debate. You heard Romney's lies.

Do you really trust this man to be in the White House?

Well it could happen. New surveys show Romney and President Obama TIED in some national polls.1

This is bad news. Romney could still squeeze out a victory and we need to do everything within our power to prevent that from happening.

That's why we've got a call program to help re-elect the President and to elect true progressives Tammy Baldwin and Sherrod Brown to the Senate.

But we need your help to make it happen. Donate \$6 to help finance our call-in program to reach critical voters in Wisconsin and Ohio right now.

Just \$6 buys a two-hour volunteer shift. \$35 buys an experienced organizer to train volunteers and make sure the system works. And \$100 buys an entire evening of online-powered call technology so dozens of people can connect to hundreds of voters in these two critical swing states. We've already raised over 12K so far which means we're already more than half-way to our goal of \$20,000! Help us reach it. Click here to donate \$6 or more right now:

[https://secure.truemajority.org/o/2/p/salsa/donation/common/public/?donate\\_page\\_KEY=7208](https://secure.truemajority.org/o/2/p/salsa/donation/common/public/?donate_page_KEY=7208).

The American people deserve honesty from their leaders. But if Romney can't even be straight with us during a debate for a couple hours, what makes you think he'll be any different once he gets in to office?

He won't. So help us stop him. Donate \$6 right now and we'll be able to reach critical voters in the battleground states of Wisconsin and Ohio.

Sincerely, David Elliot, USAction / TrueMajority

P.S. Can't donate at the moment? Please pledge a few hours to make calls into Ohio and Wisconsin for Senator Sherrod Brown, Tammy Baldwin and President Obama:

20121008-07 15:24 Ben Photo: Today's Seafood Lunch at Apple

In particular, those lovely little shrimp that would be called "small" at the grocery; while not visually as impressive as their Jumbo sibs, shrimp this size can be wonderfully sweet-tasting. These were lightly sauteed in (according to the menu) 'fried peanut oil', which seems a bit involute, but whether the oil was fried or not, the mouth feel was a lot like butter. These Texas Gulf shrimps, while small enough to be worthy of the name, were titans of flavor and plump, springy fresh texture. A generous scoop of these bad babies was the centerpiece of this composed salad, served atop a bed of glass rice noodles, surrounded by butter lettuce, sliced cucumber, sliced carrot, scallions, cilantro, mung sprouts, serano chiliis, pickled cabbage, julienned carrots, and spears of some huge Japanese mushroom that has a very long stem and a club-like head. There was a heavy dusting of curly fried wheat noodles across the top.

This was my idea of a nearly perfect salad. It was a great lunch that left me full and happy.



**Ladies, if a man says  
he will fix it, he will.  
There is no need to  
remind him every 6  
months about it.**

**My sex life is like a Ferrari...  
I don't have a Ferrari.**

**I heard a guy complaining about  
how expensive his wedding is.  
He is going to be real pissed  
when he finds out how much his  
divorce is going to cost.**

**Tell your boobs to stop  
staring at my eyes**

**My mother-in-law's coming...  
I had to clear out half my closet  
so she could have a place to  
hang upside down and sleep.**

**NASA's robot Curiosity  
landed on Mars. Early  
pictures show no signs of  
ESPN, beer, or porn. This  
makes it very clear that  
men are not from Mars.**

**I once won an argument  
with a woman...  
in this dream I had.**

Life before and after living with a woman.

Before:



1 year supply.

After:



4 days, tops.

**Men have feelings too.  
For example, we feel  
hungry.**



**I'm writing a book about  
reverse psychology...  
Please don't buy it.**

**I tried exercise, but I was  
allergic to it. My skin  
flushed, and my heart  
raced. I got sweaty and  
short of breath. Very  
dangerous.**

**My ex is living  
proof as to how  
stupid I can be.**

**I want one of those jobs where people ask, "Do you actually get paid for doing this?"**

**There is nothing worse than realizing the vacation you planned is going to be during the same week as her period.**

**If your wife or girlfriend ever asks, "If I was to arrange a threesome for your birthday, which of my friends would you pick to join in?"**

**Never give two names.**

**It is funny when my girlfriend gives me the "silent treatment."  
She thinks it is a punishment.**

**If there was a way to read a woman's mind, I am not sure I would want to. I hate shoes, shopping, gossip, and I already know I am annoying.**

**Panties are just overpriced wrapping paper**

**Whenever someone says to me, "You look familiar. Where have I seen you before?"**

**I like to respond with, "Do you watch porn?"**

**Judging by the frying pan that just flew by my head, I did something wrong.**

**I can't wait to find out what it was.**

<http://blog.bearspiritlodge.com/>



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

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Your email address will always be kept strictly confidential.

Feel free to forward this Newsletter to anyone you know on the Right or the Left, though your motives might be different in each case. Regardless, PASS IT ON! Help keep your friends and acquaintances informed and thinking.

<http://www.FriendsOfTheMiddle.org>  
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# FRIENDS OF THE MIDDLE NEWSLETTER #244 — OCT. 10, 2012

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

**INDEX: Click here.**

## **Home of the Brave**

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

I think it's almost always a good thing to follow your dreams if done passionately, even if that dream is just to sit in a rocking chair on a porch in the shade on a fall day watching the world go by and thinking about how the air feels exactly like fall in college on a football Saturday.

Yet the world is so rich with things to *do!*

It's never too late to give your Plan B a chance, even if that's just to keep it somehow nurtured and growing there in the background somewhere...at least google this or that to see how it looks, what the possibilities are...

Stay as young as you can because, what youth doesn't know, youth is where it's at. And when it occurs at an advanced age, I think that's a valuable thing indeed.



"The Siren Call of Starting Over" by Amy Gutman, *Psychology Today*

Sept. 3, 2012, (<http://www.psychologytoday.com/articles/201208/the-siren-call-starting-over>)

After a long-anticipated Brazilian vacation in February 2009, Sean Ogle had a hard time returning to his stable—if unexciting—job as a financial analyst in Portland, Oregon. For years he'd had two main goals: to travel the world and to become his own boss. Now he saw with new clarity that he wasn't on a trajectory that would help him realize either one.

Still, he had a hard time figuring out what to do. Over the years, his coworkers had come to seem like family, and he felt especially indebted to the man who'd hired him. The economy presented another stumbling block, he says. "I had a better paying job than most, with lots of potential growth. Why would I give up a steady paycheck and a comfortable life to gallivant around Asia when I had no idea what that would bring?"

But in the end, that's exactly what he did. After he was asked to suggest some money-saving ideas for the company, Ogle proposed that he work remotely for a pay cut—which his boss unexpectedly interpreted as his resignation. Rather than focus on finding another traditional job, Ogle embraced the chance to pursue Plan B: a career centered around his passions. Months before, he had reached out to blogger Chris Guillebeau, who, through his website, *The Art of Non-Conformity*, encourages others to make a living doing what they love. With his guidance, Ogle sold his car, landed a half-year, Internet-based gig he could do remotely while starting his own blogging business—and transplanted himself to Thailand.

Follow the money. Follow your heart. For many, these messages resonate—and sometimes compete—as never before. In the wake of the Great Recession, the pressure to think practically about jobs has never been greater. There might be college loans looming or a mortgage to pay, and in a rocky financial climate we're constantly reminded that a stable job with benefits is something to feel grateful for. Yet that hasn't prevented many nine-to-fivers (or increasingly, eight-to-sixers) from fantasizing about more autonomy and authenticity in their careers. As Web-savvy entrepreneurial types claim center stage in the new globalized economy and the marketplace of ideas, the call to take risks and build a brand around one's passions has never been louder—especially on the Internet. In fact, in the blogosphere, a growing number who've taken the plunge now claim that in volatile times, following your dreams may very well be the safest bet. No wonder we're more conflicted about what work means and what it should be than ever before.

Of course, for millions of Americans struggling to make ends meet, the push-pull between work that fuels the spirit and work that fuels the bank account isn't even on the radar. It's white-collar workers who tend to grapple most with their expectations: the desire to be fiscally responsible competes with a nagging anxiety that as accountants or marketing executives they're not fulfilling their promise, that they might be happier opening a brewery or making films.

Personality also plays a role. Anyone open to different types of experience is inclined to see the appeal of forging a new path, says Ronald Riggio, an organizational psychologist at Claremont McKenna College. "Those who tend to be creative or independent are likely to fit this pattern; they want careers that allow them to express who they are," adds Katharine Brooks, author of *You Majored in What? Mapping Your Path from Chaos to Career*.

Concerns about career identity are particularly acute among Millennials, who came of age with extraordinary expectations for themselves, boosted by Boomer parents who encouraged them to dream big. "They see themselves as having many career options. They're interested in doing what they want, rather than acquiescing to norms," says psychiatrist Gabriela Cora, a corporate consultant at the Executive Health & Wealth Institute in Miami.

Having grown up in a time of prosperity, many members of Gen Y have trouble reconciling the belief that they should be creating their bliss with the reality that it can be financially risky—and likely won't allow them to live at the level they did with their parents, Cora notes. "It seems clear that there's a growing gap between expectations and reality," confirms San Diego State University psychologist Jean M. Twenge, author of *Generation Me: Why Today's Young Americans Are More Confident, Assertive, Entitled—and More Miserable Than Ever Before*.

Yet it's not just Millennials who desire careers that align with their passions; a generational study of high school seniors led by Twenge suggests that Boomers, Gen Xers, and Millennials all place an extremely high value on jobs being interesting. Underscoring the widespread nature of the strife over what matters most in a career is a study by Encore.org, a think tank focusing on Boomers, work, and social purpose. Among its findings: Financial concerns are holding back millions of Americans between the ages 44 and 70 who would like to move into "encore careers" that place their talents in service to the greater good. "The urge to create something new seems very invigorating to people," says Encore.org Vice President Marci Alboher. "What I hear a lot is, 'If not now, when?'"

Through much of the last century, work trajectories seemed relatively clear. "Thirty years ago, people started a career believing they would do well and then grow old in that same job. People valued stability," Cora says. Ideals have since shifted: "Now, people want a calling." At the same time, traditional work is getting worse—jobs have become more demanding even as they offer fewer rewards, she asserts. Workers frequently find themselves with less autonomy and more tedious dead-end projects. Many of the old security guarantees are gone—without a compensating upside. "When our fathers took jobs, they at least knew they could buy a house and raise a family," says one financially strapped freelance writer, weighing the pros and cons of seeking full-time employment.

For those who are feeling less than satisfied with the corporate grind, the idea of a Plan B can be undeniably alluring—and all the more so as self-starters who've made the transition have been lionized in the media in recent years. It's also increasingly billed as practical by those who've succeeded at it, like Harvard Law School grad turned career coach Tama Kieves. "You probably have a voice of fear telling you to play it safe, heed convention. I want to represent your other voice, the one that tells you to really play it safe, by following your desire," she writes in her new book *Inspired and Unstoppable: Wildly Succeeding in Your Life's Work!*

The clamor over the benefits of taking a risk is especially conspicuous on the Web. One voice among many in the digital chorus: Ogle's. Today he's a visible exponent of one particular brand of the pursue-your-passion message; he promotes a "location independent" lifestyle through his blogs Location 180 and Location Rebel, while also traveling the world. (To make ends meet, he juggles other projects, including part-time work for his mentor, Guillebeau.)

"The more time you spend on the Internet, the more you get a sense that following your dreams and starting your own business is the norm," says Judith Donath, a faculty fellow at Harvard's Berkman Center for Internet & Society. While experts agree that entrepreneurship has become more common in the past decade, "the startup community is disproportionately represented online," she explains. "Someone may say, 'I quit my job, so I'm going to start a blog about my new wine business.' But there aren't many who will say, 'I'm going to start a blog about my day as a middle manager at Staples.'" All the bandwidth devoted to entrepreneurship may make it seem less of a gamble—but while that likely helps boost the appeal, it doesn't mean such ventures readily succeed.

For some, it might be relatively obvious which road makes the most sense. "A lot depends on whether you have kids," notes University of Texas, Austin, psychologist Kristin Neff, author of *Self-Compassion: Stop Beating Yourself Up and Leave Insecurity Behind*. Among other things, how comfortable you are with ambiguity may also play a role in whether or not you take a leap of faith. "Folks who have a high tolerance for it are better able to deal with the uncertainty that comes with following your heart, while having a low tolerance often leads to sticking with a 'safe' path," Claremont McKenna's Riggio says.

Still, knowing what's right doesn't mean that letting go of a dream and making peace with a workaday job is easy. "Concentrating on the good aspects of your current job—the reasons you chose it in the first place—can help you go from feeling like a victim to someone who's actually in control of the situation," Cora advises. In addition, she recommends thinking of ways you can bring what interests you about a Plan B career into your current position: "If you've always wanted to start something from scratch, look for ways that you can head up a new project within your company."

It may also be helpful to know research suggests career satisfaction is linked to obtaining work that offers scope for autonomy, a sense of impact and mastery, and creativity. "When you recognize that these conditions have little to do with following a pre-existing passion, you can abandon the myth that there's one perfect job for you," says Georgetown professor Cal Newport, author of *So Good They Can't Ignore You: Why Skills Trump Passion in the Quest for Work You Love*.

Meanwhile, for those still awash in confusion, Harvard Graduate School of Education's Robert Kegan, author of *In Over Our Heads: The Mental Demands of Modern Life*, counsels finding ways to tease out and reflect upon the various competing voices. One strategy he suggests is creating a four-column document identifying, in turn: a goal ("I want to better follow my own heart"), behaviors that run counter to this goal ("I accept jobs that aren't meaningful to me"), competing commitments ("I can't let down my family"), and last, assumptions that keep the third column responsibilities feeling necessary ("If my career change disappoints my family, they will stay unhappy with me"). Simply getting these ideas out of your head and onto paper will often lead to a profound shift in perspective, Kegan says.

If that ultimately convinces you that it's time to give Plan B a chance, Cora stresses the importance of pragmatism and careful planning. Rather than just quitting your job and diving right in, "work part time on your own—begin testing the water, making it an opportunity," she says. Not only will this help you determine how viable your plan is financially, you'll get the chance to find out if you actually like the work involved.

Another critical step in any successful transition: getting support. Having voices of encouragement is key to handling the stress of making a career jump, Neff points out. Fortunately, it's possible to get support 24 hours a day via the Internet—through Facebook, Twitter, and an array of niche online communities. Moreover, "the access to information and the ability to find collaborators and people who can offer advice actually reduces the real risk of starting something new by giving you practical resources for doing it," says Harvard's Donath.

No one knows this better than Ogle. "From a business standpoint and an emotional standpoint, none of this would be possible without the Internet," he says, reflecting on the road he's traveled in the past few years. "As I built my sites, I developed a support system. I had people to turn to if things didn't work out. If you sit down at a bar, what are the odds that someone next to you will share your goals and interests? Through the Internet you can find people who want the same things you do."

As attitudes toward lifelong careers have SHIFTED, FOR MANY Plan B has come to represent a work CHANGE born of passion rather than necessity. here's HOW it paid OFF FOR THREE risk-takers:

KENNY LIKIS, Cambridge, MA, Age: 61

In 2009, Kenny Likis was exploring postcollege opportunities for his son when he discovered that Teach for America didn't have an upper age limit. "I instantly decided to apply," says Likis, who became fascinated with the program after hearing founder Wendy Kopp speak in 2006.

Having previously spent more than two decades in the Boston-area high-tech world as a technical writer, a manager, and a vice president of engineering, by the mid-aughts, he was ready for something "that had more social impact." Inspired by his wife, who had moved from the tech world to education, in 2005 he left a job that felt like an increasingly poor fit. But he struggled to find his place, dealing with stretches of being "unemployed and underemployed."

Finally, Likis made a U-turn back to the tech world, a foray that was cut short by a layoff in the wake of the financial crisis. That, coupled with a life-threatening pulmonary embolism 10 days later, brought new clarity. "It all had me thinking, 'Do what you want to do,'" he says; when the Teach for America option appeared, he was more than ready.

For Likis, who began his working life as a college English teacher in his native Alabama, the five-week Teach for America summer training was "as invigorating as anything I've ever done." He spent the past two years teaching high school English and Special Education in South Boston. The good: It's exactly where he wants to be. The bad: The school where he spent the past year has no openings for this one. Despite the uncertainty, Likis has no regrets about his full-circle journey. "Once I started teaching again, I remembered how much I loved it. Finishing my working life in the classroom was a good choice for me."

NED MENOYO, Los Angeles, Age: 42

Having completed a B.F.A. in drama, Ned Menoyo, then 22, took a deep breath and assessed his next steps. "I loved acting, but I also lived in perpetual terror when I saw how actors live," he recalls. Born into a family of lawyers, it wasn't long before he found himself considering the obvious, time-tested option.

After law school and several years working in Boston, he and his wife moved to Maine, where he shuffled between the private and public sectors before landing a job in government relations. By then, he was divorced—and finally ready to take a risk.

When his best friend announced a move to Los Angeles, Menoyo was inspired to do the same and give acting another shot. As crazy as it might have seemed to others, "the decision was clear for me. Acting felt like unfinished business. I wanted to put that to rest," he says. In the years that followed, he enjoyed a certain success: a few commercials, student films, a single scene with Tatum O'Neal—capped by being cast as the lead in a (yet-to-be-released) independent action film.

Then life intervened. While Menoyo didn't find fame out West, he did find a second chance at love and a family, which led him to re-imagine his career once again. Now a married father of two, he's spent the past six years as a staff attorney at a Los Angeles law firm. He's grateful for the law degree and stable career he once took for granted, even as he continues to pursue his love of acting. "I've found a way to do both—for now, that's good enough for me."

#### RACHEL COOK, New York, Age: 28

At 25, Rachel Cook was making more money than she'd expected, but as a futures and equities trader, "I wasn't creating a product or helping anyone. I especially wanted to help women," she recalls. It was fun, but unfulfilling.

After happening upon a story in *The New York Times* about how microlending is transforming life in impoverished communities by providing women with small loans to start businesses, "I decided on the spot to make a global documentary exploring the impact of microfinance."

With no film industry connections to speak of, Cook's first stop was Craigslist, where she posted an ad seeking a director of photography. Among the respondents was Steven Hiller, a veteran of dozens of Hollywood studio films, including *Terms of Endearment*. Once he signed on, others quickly followed. Funding came from Duke University, Royal Roads University, Kickstarter donors, and Cook's own savings. Shooting began in South America in April 2010; next came stops in India, Bangladesh, Kenya, and even Detroit.

With the film slated to premiere this October at Duke, Cook's alma mater, she's also deeply focused on a related for-profit venture: a (patent-pending) social game called *Seeds*, which combines micro-lending with the lucrative online game world. "I believe what I'm doing can transform the world in positive ways while also generating healthy financial returns," Cook says, noting that microfinance and social gaming are both multi-billion-dollar industries. "Profitability and social conscience are not mutually exclusive."

While her days are far longer and her bank account far lighter than in her trading days, "I've never been happier," Cook says. "I care deeply about what I'm doing. I feel I'm making an impact—so I have the energy to do whatever needs to be done."

#### Dreams Hold Strong

Don't let go of your dreams  
Hug them tight.  
Remember them long  
Not dreams of the night  
But of possibilities I sing.

Nothing can prevent  
But the fear.  
Yet when fear is gone  
Life is ever clear  
And dreams hold strong.

We live our lives  
Day by day.  
No, moment by moment  
Our dreams hold sway  
Above the abyss you know.

Not easy for me here  
Not being there.  
Let me accept all blame  
And Zen breath share  
As we live our human art.

No past and no future  
Except our dreams.  
May your heart be filled with love  
Though nothing's as it seems  
Your dreams hold strong.

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<a href="#">20121009-01</a>	11:45	Pam	Re: "6 Ridiculous Lies You Believe About the Founding of America" (reply to Tom, FotM Newsletter #243)
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And the hits just keep coming. Thank you, Mr. Tom.

I don't know my American history well enough to comment on the veracity of Tom's revisionism, but if what he says is true, I find it extremely interesting, not disturbing, as he seems to assume we would. OK, so the Vikings discovered America. Great. I'd like to know more about that. I have no problem at all learning that things I thought were factually true turn out to be somebody's spin. All history is somebody's spin. New things are discovered, and the narrative changes. That's why there are new books on history; the last word has not yet been spoken. It is not deception to concoct a national story. That's been going on at least since Homer. The early Greeks read "The Iliad" to learn about their past. Was there actually a siege of Troy? Did Achilles actually live? For centuries no one thought so, and "The Iliad" was considered "myth," fabrication by a poet, based on earlier fabrications by other poets. Then in the 19th c. an archaeological site in Turkey was discovered that matched many of the details in the ancient poem. Here was evidence that at least some of what Homer had declaimed was true. History is just that: a story, the story we tell about ourselves. All societies have collective myths that over time, with access to better information, transmute into something more closely approximating the "truth." I did not know that a plague wiped out 90% of the Native Americans before Europeans came to our shores. If that's so, I find it fascinating. Disease has certainly affected history at other times in other places--ancient Athens, for one. It makes sense that America would create a myth that displays our character, or what we would like our character to be. What is the American myth? You find it everywhere in literature, art, even advertising. America is a new world, an Edenic world, populated by a new Adam, who ventures forth to conquer the frontier and bring civilization and a "city on the hill." America is about the individual, strong male loners and brave, long-suffering women. The Lone Ranger. Davy Crockett. Read "The Last of the Mohicans" if you want an interesting take on European/Native American relations, and read it against the background of what was actually going on at the time. The Marlboro man, with his eye on the horizon. Charles Bronson meting out justice, Rambo going it alone in the jungle, Gary Cooper in one of the great movies of all time, "High Noon." Boy, is that film ever archetypal! We can compare our myth with those of other countries for interesting insights into our national character. Canada and the U.S. are

alike in lots of ways, but our national myths are quite different. Canadians are rather more fatalistic than we, more concerned with survival than with conquering. In America men go out and tame the wilderness. In Canada, when a man goes out into the wilderness (in their myth), he either dies or goes insane. Same goes for the women. There are lots of crazy pioneer women in Canadian lore. One side of the border believes it is invincible, the other knows that a small miscalculation will almost certainly end in annihilation. These distinct myths continue to inform our societies, our politics, our assumptions about human nature. It's all contingent. Trying to nail down the past is like trying to nail down jello. No, I am not shocked to learn that Columbus was a rat or that Native Americans had built great civilizations. What do I take from this? Nothing is entirely what it seems, and nothing lasts forever. Arrogance and aggression can accomplish much, as America abundantly demonstrates. But holding onto a worn-out myth because it suits your world view can be dangerous. It can blind you to other ideas about what constitutes the good life, and that can, perhaps, lead to Armageddon, as any visitor to the Middle East could undoubtedly tell you.

<a href="#">20121009-02</a>	11:54	Pam	Re: Video: Obama's Second Term Tax Plans (reply to Tom, FotM Newsletter #243)
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Well, I watched Dick Morris attempt to terrorize the well-off, and I see Obama's proposed tax plan very differently from him. Hell, yes, we need to increase revenue. You make \$250,000 and your taxes go up to \$20,000? And your point is? Raising the cut-off for Social Security from \$100,000 to \$150,000 is a problem? You're kidding, right? If you think the government should "live within its means," then you should scale back on your vacations in Aspen or your purchase of a new car every year. If Americans are so all-fired individualistic, shouldn't the individual exercise a little prudence in his own life, as well as expect it at the societal level. It is obscene for the well-off to whine about not wanting to share like a bunch of three-year olds. J---s!

<a href="#">20121009-03</a>	11:59	Pam	Re: "The Maimed" (reply to SteveB, FotM Newsletter #243)
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I thought Chris Hedges speech to the veterans was magnificent. I just finished reading Tim O'Brien's *The Things They Carried*, his autobiographical novel about the Viet Nam war. My grandmother used to say that "childbirth is women's war," and it's true: childbirth is hard as hell in ways no man will ever understand. But war IS hell in ways I will never understand. Which is harder to live with in the aftermath?

<a href="#">20121009-04</a>	12:26	SteveB	"Highly Debatable: The Big Liar's Biggest Lies"
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["Highly Debatable: The Big Liar's Biggest Lies" by Joe Conason, NationofChange](#)

Sept. 9, 2012, (<http://www.nationofchange.org/highly-debatable-big-liar-s-biggest-lies-1349788797>)

"It's not easy to debate a liar," complained an email from one observer of the first presidential debate — and there was no question about which candidate he meant. Prevarication, falsification, fabrication are all familiar tactics that have been employed by Mitt Romney without much consequence to him ever since he entered public life, thanks to the inviolable taboo in the mainstream media against calling out a liar (unless, of course, he lies about sex).

Yes, President Obama ought to have been better prepared for Romney's barrage of blather and bull. The Republican's own chief advisor, Eric Fehrnstrom, had glibly described the "Etch-a-Sketch" strategy they would deploy in the general election, to make swing voters forget the "severe conservative" of the primaries. Romney executed that pivot on Wednesday night, but he could do so only by spouting literally dozens of provably fraudulent assertions — which various diligent fact-checkers proceeded to debunk.

Knowing that he is vulnerable on taxation and the budget for many reasons, including his own peculiar and secretive tax history, Romney made several contradictory claims regarding his economic plan. He has no plan to lavish \$5 trillion in tax breaks on the wealthy. He won't cut taxes for the rich at all. He vowed to provide tax relief to the middle class and won't increase their tax burden. He swore that his tax cuts would not increase the deficit.

Finally, he said that with all of that, he would grow the economy enough to shrink and eventually eliminate the deficit — without raising taxes on anyone. And he claimed that there are several studies proving he can fulfill all of these conflicting promises — even though he refuses to provide any specific tax proposals beyond a broad tax cut.

There is no study proving that Romney can do what he promised, and among his lies is his description of editorials in the *Wall Street Journal* as "studies" of his plan. The most complete and unrefuted study of his claims remains the Tax Policy Center's bipartisan report on the Romney plan, which shows that there is simply no way to pay for his \$5 trillion, across-the-board tax cut without raising taxes on the middle class. None of the alternative studies he has cited proves otherwise — and some of them actually amass additional evidence that he is wrong.

Undoubtedly he knows all that. He knows that eliminating the estate tax, a mainstay of his plan, will benefit the rich enormously and almost nobody else.

He also knows that when he claims economic growth alone will erase the deficit, without raising taxes, he is inventing impossible numbers. As The National Memo's Howard Hill demonstrated yesterday, the assumptions behind his claims are ridiculous.

For the numbers to work, he would have to create not 12 million jobs, as he promised to do by 2016, but 162 million — more than the total current U.S. workforce. Or else the jobs created would have to pay more than \$443,000 per year on average, which is even less likely than Rafalca winning the dressage medal at the next Summer Olympics.

At the same time, Romney accused the president of increasing the federal debt by an amount that is "almost as much as all prior presidents combined." This charge, which he leveled before, is patently false and by now Romney must know it. The prior debt, mostly run up by George W. Bush and his Republican congressional cronies, stood above \$10 trillion when Obama took office. The debt is now just over \$16 trillion, mostly due to costs incurred by Bush and by Obama's successful effort to prevent a Depression.

Having essentially disavowed the health care reforms that were his sole significant achievement in his single term in elected office, the former Massachusetts governor suddenly claimed ownership of Romneycare. Presumably, this will make him more appealing to swing voters, too. But he still wants to do away with Obamacare, except for the parts that are popular.

For this maneuver, he must misrepresent his own proposed federal health care overhaul. He says there will be no change to Medicare for current beneficiaries, but repealing the Affordable Care Act will deprive them of free preventive care, increase their costs for prescription drugs and do irreparable harm to Medicaid, which provides assisted care for nine million destitute Medicare patients.

But Romney has been lying about the Affordable Care Act for years, according to his own former advisor Jonathan Gruber, the chief intellectual architect of Romneycare. Nearly a year ago, Gruber complained that Romney's attempt to draw a sharp distinction between the Massachusetts legislation and Obamacare was phony. He told Capital New York in November 2011 that "they're the same fucking bill. He just can't have his cake and eat it too. Basically, you know, it's the same bill. He can try to draw distinctions and stuff, but he's just lying."

Lying again? Indeed, the falsehoods flowed on every conceivable subject. Concerning energy, Romney claimed that "about half" of the renewable energy firms that received federal assistance under Obama administration programs went bankrupt — a claim that cannot be justified by any measure. Of the 28 firms that got federal loans or loan guarantees, three went under, representing less than 11 percent — and less than 5 percent of the funds committed. (This assertion was so blatantly untrue that the Romney campaign withdrew it the next day.)

The examples cited above hardly exhaust the deep well of dishonesty in the Republican campaign. What Romney has done presents a fundamental challenge to the American political media. Will news outlets hold him accountable for baldly misleading voters? Are they capable of confronting his continuous mendacity with basic facts? Some have made a beginning, while others have scarcely tried. If that isn't their responsibility, then they no longer have any purpose at all.

Swordfish: I've told ya'll before that I hadn't known what swordfish should taste like until having had it here.

My filet was like that today: a reminder of why to some folks, swordfish is a delicacy. Prepared with a rare-to-medium-rare center, swordfish rivals tuna for dense, firm flesh with a fine non-fishy, meaty texture and smooth, rich-yet-mild flavor.

Chef Alejandro topped my steak with a lovely green cilantro-mint-jalapeno-shallot sauce (quite mild, for all that) that set off the rich fish nicely. Creamy chunks of glazed roasted sweet potato brought the Turf to this fine dish, and butter lettuce with cherry tomatoes and pickled cabbage rounded it out.

I have not figured out what those cute crispie red strands are, and I keep forgetting to ask. I can't taste them clearly, which made the first possibility that occurred to me saffron, since I seem not to be able to taste saffron. And that would be an awful lot of saffron, which has a by-weight value in the ball park with gold.

I'll have to ask Alex.

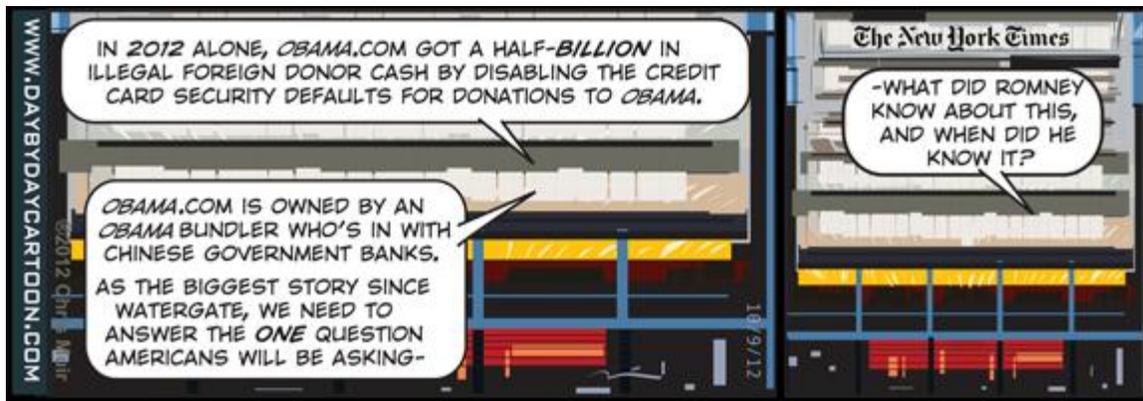
Nothing I like better than a fish and veggies lunch, when the fish is fresh, local vegetables are chosen for balance and harmony, and everything is treated with thoughtful respect to bring out its best qualities.

If I ever retire, I must negotiate access to Caffe Macs...

Larry came to join me today, so... no book update.



Swordfish, Sweetaters, and Salad



"The Post-Constitutional President" by Frank Gaffney, Jr., Center for Security Policy

Oct 09, 2012, (<http://www.centerforsecuritypolicy.org/p19113.xml>)

Team Obama insists that next month's presidential election is "a choice, not a referendum." It sure seems to be with respect to the two candidates very different views on the Constitution. Mitt Romney makes plain at every turn his commitment to that document, while Barack Obama's conduct in office has marked him as the post-constitutional president.

Consider just a few examples of Mr. Obama's systematic disregard of, contempt for and/or deviation from a national charter he swore an oath to preserve, protect and defend:

- President Obama has simply refused to uphold federal laws with which he disagrees, including the Defense of Marriage Act and immigration statutes.
- After confirming that, in the absence of congressional authorization, he lacked the authority to give what amounts to an amnesty to young illegal aliens, President Obama went ahead and declared it by executive fiat.
- Despite repeated congressional objections to federal purchase of a state prison in Thomson, Illinois to which the Obama administration has sought to relocate jihadists currently held as detainees at Guantanamo Bay, Mr. Obama last week authorized its acquisition for \$165 million.
- Ever since it came to office, the Obama administration has sought to accommodate Islamist demands that freedom of expression be curbed, lest it offend Muslims and stoke violence. For example, in 2009, it co-sponsored a UN Human Rights Council resolution along those lines. In 2011, it launched the so-called "Istanbul Process" to find common ground with proponents of shariah blasphemy laws who seek to strip us of our First Amendment freedoms.
- And in September 2012, President Obama announced at the United Nations: "The future must not belong to those who slander the prophet of Islam" - a stance indistinguishable from that of the Muslim Brotherhood, the Taliban and al Qaeda.
- A particularly ominous example of Mr. Obama's post-constitutional presidency involves his abdication of his first duty as Commander-in-Chief: to secure the common defense. Having successfully engineered two rounds of deep defense budget reductions totaling some \$800 billion over the next ten years, the President is intent on inflicting a further, devastating half-a-trillion dollar, across-the-board cut pursuant to a process known on Capitol Hill as sequestration.

There is no getting around it: Cuts of this magnitude are going to result in tremendous disruptions of defense programs and attendant job losses in the associated industries. A federal law known as the WARN Act requires companies with more than 100 employees to give them notice of potential lay-offs sixty days in advance. With sequestration due to kick in on January 2, 2013, that means the mandatory warning of potential pink slips to come would arrive just before the November 6th election.

To avoid such a particularly untimely reminder of the president's dismal stewardship of his economic as well as national security portfolios, in July the Obama Labor Department issued guidance to defense contractors saying that the WARN Act's requirements would not be enforced. The pretext given was that, since sequestration's potential effects on particular contracts had not been specified, there was insufficient basis to know the extent of the impact on employment and, therefore, the statute would not apply.

Of course, one reason the potential effects of sequestration are not known with precision less than three months before they are statutorily required to go into effect is that the Obama administration has ordered the Pentagon not to make any plans for implementing that next round of cuts. This directive was reaffirmed on September 27th. Then, Team Obama advised contractors the next day that, as *The Hill* reported: "They would be compensated for legal costs if layoffs occur due to contract cancellations under sequestration - but only if the contractors follow the Labor [Department] guidance." In other words, the administration now wants the taxpayer to pick up the tab for violations of the law by those it has induced to engage in them.

Republican Senators John McCain, Lindsey Graham and Kelly Ayotte, respectively of Arizona, South Carolina and New Hampshire, have been among those tirelessly warning for months of the catastrophe sequestration will inflict on the U.S. military. They issued a joint statement in response to the president's latest post-constitutional action which said, in part, "The Obama Administration is cynically trying to skirt the WARN Act to keep the American people in the dark about this looming national security and fiscal crisis. The president should insist that companies act in accordance with the clearly stated law and move forward with the layoff notices." (Detailed estimates of the magnitude of that crisis as it is likely to manifest itself in states, counties, cities and congressional districts across the country can be obtained at <http://www.FortheCommonDefense.org/reports>.)

In an important essay published on September 24th in the *Wall Street Journal*, former U.S. Attorney General Michael Mukasey called on legislators to put Mr. Obama on notice: If, as widely expected, he proceeds after the election to yield to Islamist demands that he transfer (presumably to Egypt) or release the lead conspirator in the first World Trade Center attack, Omar Abdul Rahman, it "could be considered the kind of gross betrayal of public trust that would justify removal from high office." The same should apply to Mr. Obama's palpable contempt for the Constitution - something sure to be even more in evidence if he secures reelection and, as he says, "more flexibility" in a second term.

20121009-08	23:10	SteveB	Re: "The Post-Constitutional President" (reply to Tom, above)
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Well...this is a particularly juicy bunch of malarkey!

Perhaps, as *opinions*, some of the article's points could be tolerated, but as *facts*, much is left to be desired.

Though I don't feel much compulsion to defend a stoned President who can't be bothered to defend *himself*, the facts, or the views of his constituents, still...the truth should be told.

Let me address the major points in the bullet text:

- **The Defense of Marriage Act:** "Clinton and key legislators have changed their views and advocated DOMA's repeal. The Obama administration announced in 2011 that it had determined that section 3 was unconstitutional and, though it would continue to enforce the law, it would no longer defend it in court. In response, the Republican leadership of the House of Representatives instructed the House General Counsel to defend the law in place of the Department of Justice (DOJ). Section 3 of DOMA has been found unconstitutional in seven federal courts on issues including bankruptcy, public employee benefits, estate

taxes, and immigration. As of 2012 five of those cases are awaiting a response for review from the U.S. Supreme Court.” (Wikipedia, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Defense\\_of\\_Marriage\\_Act](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Defense_of_Marriage_Act)) If you ask me, the President is doing a good job here of *defending* the Constitution.

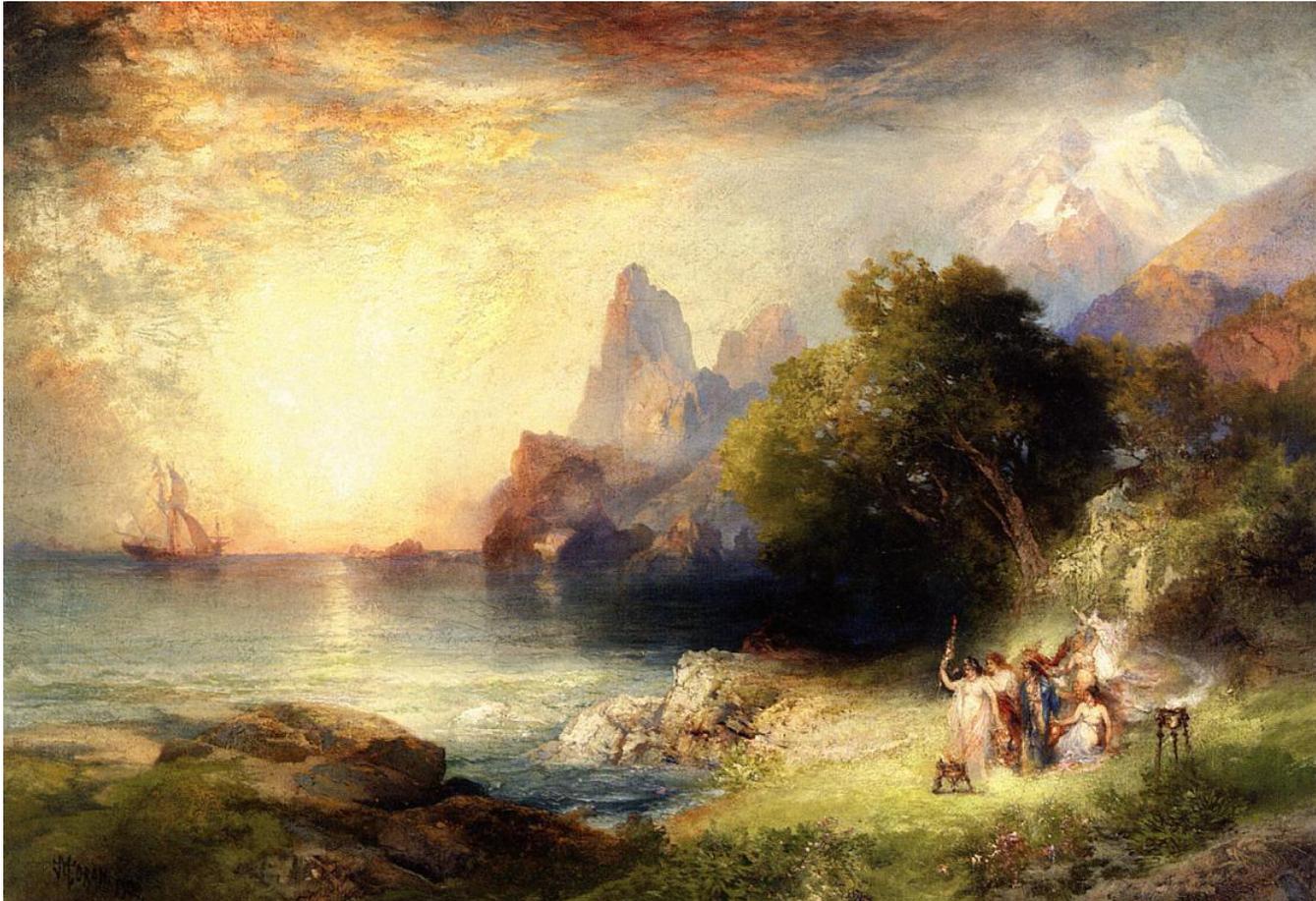
- **Illegal Immigration:** The President has actually been surprisingly tough on illegal immigration, deporting record numbers of aliens. It’s actually the union-busting Republicans who fight to keep our borders porous. Cheap labor is conducive to higher profits, in their misguided logic. Even Romney seems to take a similar stand in some regards: “Republican presidential candidate Mitt Romney said Monday that illegal immigrants who receive temporary work permits because of the recent policy change by President Obama would be allowed to keep them under a Romney administration.” (<http://thehill.com/video/campaign/259645-romney-says-he-would-keep-obama-immigration-deportation-waviers>)

- **Thomson, Illinois Prison:** “According to Durbin’s office, the local economic impact of the annual operation of the facilities is expected to generate more than \$122 million in operating expenditures (including salaries), \$19 million in labor income, and \$61 million in local business sales.” All good—jobs created and the Feds save the cost of constructing a new prison. But here’s the problem that probably resulted in this point being raised above: “U.S. Rep. Frank Wolf (R-Virginia), chairman of the House appropriations subcommittee that controls the Justice Department budget, opposed the sale because of concerns that President Obama would give the order to move Guantanamo Bay detainees to the Thomson location. Durbin stated that Wolf was still convinced, despite repeated assurances to the contrary by Attorney General Eric Holder, including under oath in a Senate hearing, that the detainees would be moved to the facilities.” ([http://www.pacc-news.com/10-10-12/thomson\\_prison10\\_10\\_12.html](http://www.pacc-news.com/10-10-12/thomson_prison10_10_12.html))

- **President’s Speech at the UN:** (actual context) “The impulse towards intolerance and violence may initially be focused on the West, but over time it cannot be contained. The same impulses toward extremism are used to justify war between Sunni and Shia, between tribes and clans. It leads not to strength and prosperity but to chaos. In less than two years, we have seen largely peaceful protests bring more change to Muslim-majority countries than a decade of violence. And extremists understand this. Because they have nothing to offer to improve the lives of people, violence is their only way to stay relevant. They don’t build; they only destroy. [...] The future must not belong to those who slander the prophet of Islam. But to be credible, those who condemn that slander must also condemn the hate we see in the images of Jesus Christ that are desecrated, or churches that are destroyed, or the Holocaust that is denied.” ([http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/under-god/post/obama-the-future-must-not-belong-to-those-who-slander-the-prophet-of-islam/2012/09/26/acb9ab92-0810-11e2-a10c-fa5a255a9258\\_blog.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/under-god/post/obama-the-future-must-not-belong-to-those-who-slander-the-prophet-of-islam/2012/09/26/acb9ab92-0810-11e2-a10c-fa5a255a9258_blog.html)) To me, this sounds like a passionate *defense* of the Constitution.

- **“Abdication” of Commander-in-Chief duties:** This one is particularly loathsome—as if the President hasn’t fought terrorism in an effective and, indeed, merciless manner, unlike his predecessor. The defense budget needs to be cut to *protect* the Constitution! And let’s stop pretending that Republicans in Congress and their “fiscal cliff” have nothing to do with American politics. If you ask me, Romney abdicated these duties even before he took them on—when he snubbed our troops and veterans at the Republican National Convention. (<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-south-asia-13257330>)

<http://thefaustianman.tumblr.com/post/3866687798/cutlere-thomas-moran-ulysses-the-sirens>



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

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## FRIENDS OF THE MIDDLE NEWSLETTER #245 — OCT. 11, 2012

*Welcome to always lively political discussion and whatever else comes up.*  
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**INDEX: Click here.**

### **Universes 'Like Grains of Sand'**

(posted by Steven W. Baker / SteveB, Oct. 11, 2012)

Why are we *here*? I don't so much mean the "why" as the place *where* we exist in space and time. The physics, less the math, is not that hard, mind-expanding if you follow along... Surely it's a big enough universe for both conservatives and progressives...?

"Welcome to the Multiverse" by Brian Greene, Newsweek/The Daily Beast

May 21, 2012, (<http://www.thedailybeast.com/newsweek/2012/05/20/brian-greene-welcome-to-the-multiverse.html>)



(The latest developments in cosmology point toward the possibility that our universe is merely one of billions.)

"What really interests me is whether God had any choice in creating the world."

That's how Albert Einstein, in his characteristically poetic way, asked whether our universe is the only possible universe.

The reference to God is easily misread, as Einstein's question wasn't theological. Instead, Einstein wanted to know whether the laws of physics necessarily yield a unique universe—ours—filled with galaxies, stars, and planets. Or instead, like each year's assortment of new cars on the dealer's lot, could the laws allow for universes with a wide range of different features? And if so, is the majestic reality we've come to know—through powerful telescopes and mammoth particle colliders—the product of some random process, a cosmic roll of the dice that selected our features from a menu of possibilities? Or is there a deeper explanation for why things are the way they are?

In Einstein's day, the possibility that our universe could have turned out differently was a mind-bender that physicists might have bandied about long after the day's more serious research was done. But recently, the question has shifted from the outskirts of physics to the mainstream. And rather than merely imagining that our universe might have had different properties, proponents of three independent developments now suggest that there are other universes, separate from ours, most made from different kinds of particles and governed by different forces, populating an astoundingly vast cosmos.

The multiverse, as this vast cosmos is called, is one of the most polarizing concepts to have emerged from physics in decades, inspiring heated arguments between those who propose that it is the next phase in our understanding of reality, and those who claim that it is utter nonsense, a travesty born of theoreticians letting their imaginations run wild.

So which is it? And why should we care? Grasping the answer requires that we first come to grips with the big bang.

### In Search of the Bang

In 1915, Einstein published the most important of all his works, the general theory of relativity, which was the culmination of a 10-year search to understand the force of gravity. The theory was a marvel of mathematical beauty, providing equations that could explain everything from the motion of planets to the trajectory of starlight with stupendous accuracy.

Within a few short years, additional mathematical analyses concluded that space itself is expanding, dragging each galaxy away from every other. Though Einstein at first strongly resisted this startling implication of his own theory, observations of deep space made by the great American astronomer Edwin Hubble in 1929 confirmed it. And before long, scientists reasoned that if space is now expanding, then at ever earlier times the universe must have been ever smaller. At some moment in the distant past, everything we now see—the ingredients responsible for every planet, every star, every galaxy, even space itself—must have been compressed to an infinitesimal speck that then swelled outward, evolving into the universe as we know it.

The big-bang theory was born. During the decades that followed, the theory would receive overwhelming observational support. Yet scientists were aware that the big-bang theory suffered from a significant shortcoming. Of all things, it leaves out the bang. Einstein's equations do a wonderful job of describing how the universe evolved from a split second after the bang, but the equations break down (similar to the error message returned by a calculator when you try to divide 1 by 0?) when applied to the extreme environment of the universe's earliest moment. The big bang thus provides no insight into what might have powered the bang itself.

### Fuel for the Fire

In the 1980s, physicist Alan Guth offered an enhanced version of the big-bang theory, called inflationary cosmology, which promised to fill this critical gap. The centerpiece of the proposal is a hypothetical cosmic fuel that, if concentrated in a tiny region, would drive a brief but stupendous outward rush of space—a bang, and a big one at that. In fact, mathematical calculations showed that the burst would have been so intense that tiny jitters from the quantum realm would have been stretched enormously and smeared clear across space. Like overextended spandex showing the pattern of its weave, this would yield a precise pattern of miniscule temperature variations, slightly hotter spots and slightly colder spots dotting the night sky. In the early 1990s, NASA's Cosmic Microwave

Background Explorer satellite first detected these temperature variations, garnering Nobel Prizes for team leaders John Mather and George Smoot.

Remarkably, mathematical analysis also revealed—and here's where the multiverse enters—that as space expands the cosmic fuel replenishes itself, and so efficiently that it is virtually impossible to use it all up. Which means that the big bang would likely not be a unique event. Instead, the fuel would not only power the bang giving rise to our expanding realm, but it would power countless other bangs, too, each yielding its own separate, expanding universe. Our universe would then be a single expanding bubble inhabiting a grand cosmic bubble bath of universes—a multiverse.

It's a striking prospect. If correct, it would provide the capstone on a long series of cosmic reappraisals. We once thought our planet was the center of it all, only to realize that we're one of many planets orbiting the sun, only then to learn that the sun, parked in a suburb of the Milky Way, is one of hundreds of billions of stars in our galaxy, only then to find that the Milky Way is one of hundreds of billions of galaxies inhabiting the universe. Now, inflationary cosmology was suggesting that our universe, filled with those billions of galaxies, stars, and planets, might merely be one of many occupying a vast multiverse.

Yet, when the multiverse was proposed back in the 1980s by pioneers Andrei Linde and Alexander Vilenkin, the community of physicists shrugged. The other universes, even if they existed, would stand outside what we can observe—we only have access to this universe. Apparently, then, they wouldn't affect us and we wouldn't affect them. So what role could other universes possibly play in science, a discipline devoted to explaining what we do see?

And that's where things stood for about a decade, until an astounding astronomical observation suggested an answer.

### The Mystery of Dark Energy

Although the discovery that space is expanding was revolutionary, there was one aspect of the expansion that most everyone took for granted. Just as the pull of earth's gravity slows the ascent of a ball tossed upward, the gravitational pull of each galaxy on every other must be slowing the expansion of space.

In the 1990s, two teams of astronomers set out to measure the rate of this cosmic slowdown. Through years of painstaking observations of distant galaxies, the teams collected data on how the expansion rate of space has changed over time. And when they completed the analysis, they all nearly fell out of their chairs. Both teams found that, far from slowing down, the expansion of space went into overdrive about 7 billion years ago and has been speeding up ever since. That's like gently tossing a ball upward, having it slow down initially, but then rocket upward ever more quickly.

The result sent scientists across the globe scurrying to explain the cosmic speedup. What force could be driving every galaxy to rush away from every other faster and faster? The most promising answer comes to us from an old idea of Einstein's. We're all used to gravity being a force that does only one thing: pull objects toward each other. But in Einstein's general theory of relativity, gravity can also do something else: it can push things apart. How? Well, the gravity exerted by familiar objects like the moon, the earth, and the sun is surely attractive. But Einstein's equations show that if space contains something else—not clumps of matter but an invisible energy, sort of like an invisible mist that's uniformly spread through space—then the gravity exerted by the energy mist would be repulsive.

Which is just what we need to explain the observations. The repulsive gravity of an invisible energy mist filling space—we now call it dark energy—would push every galaxy away from every other, driving the expansion to speed up, not slow down.

But there's a hitch. When the astronomers deduced how much dark energy would have to permeate every nook and cranny of space to account for the observed cosmic speedup, they found a number that no one has been able to explain. Not even close. Expressed in the relevant units, the dark-energy density is extraordinarily small:



wrongheaded. Just as it makes no sense to ask for a definitive prediction of the distance at which planets orbit their host stars, since there are many possible distances, if we're part of a multiverse it would make no sense to ask for a definitive prediction of the value of dark energy, since there would be many possible values.

The multiverse doesn't change the scientific method or lower explanatory standards. But it does ask us to reevaluate whether we've mistakenly posed the wrong questions.

### Hanging by Strings

Of course, for this approach to succeed, we must be sure that among the multiverse's many different dark-energy values is the very one we've measured. And that's where a third line of investigation, string theory, comes to the fore.

String theory is an attempt to realize Einstein's dream of a "unified theory" capable of stitching all matter and forces into a single mathematical tapestry. Initially formulated in the late 1960s, the theory envisions that deep inside every fundamental particle is a tiny, vibrating, stringlike filament of energy. And much as the different vibrational patterns of a violin string yield different musical notes, so the different vibrational patterns of these tiny strings would yield different kinds of particles.

Pioneers of the subject anticipated that string theory's rigid mathematical architecture would soon yield a single set of definitive, testable predictions. But as the years passed, detailed analysis of the theory's equations revealed numerous solutions, each representing a different possible universe. And numerous means numerous. Today, the tally of possible universes stands at the almost incomprehensible 10<sup>500</sup>, a number so large it defies analogy.

For some string-theory advocates, this stupendous failure to yield a unique universe—ours—was a devastating blow. But to those advancing the multiverse, string theory's enormous diversity of possible universes has proven vital.

Just as it takes a well-stocked shoe store to guarantee you'll find your size, only a well-stocked multiverse can guarantee that our universe, with its peculiar amount of dark energy, will be represented. On its own, inflationary cosmology falls short of the mark. While its never-ending series of big bangs would yield an immense collection of universes, many would have similar features, like a shoe store with stacks and stacks of sizes 5 and 13, but nothing in the size you seek.

By combining inflationary cosmology and string theory, however, the stock room of universes overflows: in the hands of inflation, string theory's enormously diverse collection of possible universes become actual universes, brought to life by one big bang after another. Our universe is then virtually guaranteed to be among them. And because of the special features necessary for our form of life, that's the universe we inhabit.

### High-Risk Science

Years ago, Carl Sagan emphasized that extraordinary claims require extraordinary evidence. So, can we gather evidence supporting a proposal that invokes other universes?

Because the other universes would lie beyond what we can observe, it might seem that the answer is no, placing the multiverse outside the bounds of science. But that's too quick. Evidence for a proposal can be amassed even when some of its important features are inaccessible.

Take black holes. Scientists routinely use general relativity to speak with confidence about what happens inside a black hole, even though nothing, not even light, can escape a black hole's interior, rendering such regions unobservable. The justification is that once a theory makes a slew of accurate predictions about things we can observe, as general relativity has, we justifiably gain confidence in the theory's predictions about things we can't observe.

Similarly, if a proposal that invokes the multiverse gains our confidence by making correct predictions about things we do have access to, things in our universe, then our confidence in its prediction of other universes, realms we don't have access to, would rightly grow too.

As of today, we are far from crossing this threshold. Inflationary cosmology makes accurate predictions about microwave background radiation; dark energy accurately explains accelerated expansion. But string theory remains hypothetical, largely because its primary distinguishing features become manifest at scales billions of times smaller than we can probe even with today's most powerful accelerators.

More direct evidence for the multiverse might come from potential collisions between our expanding universe and its neighbors. Such a cosmic fender bender would generate an additional pattern of temperature variations in the microwave background radiation that sophisticated telescopes might one day detect. Many consider this the most promising possibility for finding evidence in support of the multiverse.

That there are ways, long shots to be sure, to test the multiverse proposal reflects its origin in careful mathematical analysis. Nevertheless, because the proposal is unquestionably tentative, we must approach it with healthy skepticism and invoke its explanatory framework judiciously.

Imagine that when the apple fell on Newton's head, he wasn't inspired to develop the law of gravity, but instead reasoned that some apples fall down, others fall up, and we observe the downward variety simply because the upward ones have long since departed for outer space. The example is facetious but the point serious: used indiscriminately, the multiverse can be a cop-out that diverts scientists from seeking deeper explanations. On the other hand, failure to consider the multiverse can place scientists on a Keplerian treadmill in which they furiously chase answers to unanswerable questions.

Which is all just to say that the multiverse falls squarely in the domain of high-risk science. There are numerous developments that could weaken the motivation for considering it, from scientists finally calculating the correct dark-energy value, or confirming a version of inflationary cosmology that only yields a single universe, or discovering that string theory no longer supports a cornucopia of possible universes. And so on.

But as with all rational bets, high risk comes with the potential for high reward. During the past five centuries we've used the power of observation and mathematical calculation to shatter misconceptions. From a quaint, small, earth-centered universe to one filled with billions of galaxies, the journey has been both thrilling and humbling. We've been compelled to relinquish sacred belief in our own centrality, but with such cosmic demotion we've demonstrated the capacity of the human intellect to reach far beyond the confines of ordinary experience to reveal extraordinary truth. The multiverse proposal might be wrong. But it might also be the next step in this journey, unveiling a breathtaking panorama of universes populating a vast cosmic landscape. For some scientists, including me, that possibility makes the risk well worth taking.



20121010-01

09:31 Pam

Re: "The Post-Constitutional President" (reply to Tom, FotM Newsletter #244)

I was going to respond to Tom's attack on Obama until I read SteveB's response, which is way more informative than anything I was going to say. I do want to comment on one of the issues Tom raises, however: the Defense of Marriage Act. There's an ad for Romney playing in NC that praises his stance on gay marriage and ends by asking, "Which candidate shares YOUR values?" There may be more important issues--like a nuclear Iran, our collapsing infrastructure, massive cuts to education--but to a gay person who wants to live like every other married couple in America, this is THE issue. I think it's always good, when looking at a choice of options, to ask, Who will benefit and who will be hurt by this or that particular action? Who would benefit from gay marriage? Any children the couple might have would have equal status with their peers. The benefits that married couples take for granted--insurance coverage, death benefits, medical access to a spouse, equality with other couples, respect for their commitment--would extend to same-sex partners. Who would be hurt and how? In practical terms, no one would be hurt. All married couples would enjoy the same rights and responsibilities. It's only those whose religion (it's always religion that is the problem) forbids homosexuality, whose SENSIBILITIES would be hurt, who care a fig what other people do.

It's ironic that Americans squawk and carry on when Muslims get agitated about criticism and mockery of Muhammad. "We believe in free speech," they cry. "No one has the right to not be offended; that comes with freedom." Yet, the only argument against same-sex marriage is that some find it offensive. I find deliberate baiting of Muslim sensibilities offensive. We could split hairs forever trying to solve this, but really it all boils down to common sense. At the very least, it's rude to attack a person's religion and be deliberately insulting. Freedom does not mean license to be a jackass. I know it would offend others if I were to do something disgusting at the dinner table (fill in with your own image), so, even though I may be free to commit a faux pas, it would be unseemly for me to do so. I am not Catholic, but when I enter a Catholic church, I wear a hat. The Golden Rule is still a good one, so let's extend tolerance and charity where we can and mind our manners like grown ups. I know I've conflated same-sex marriage with attacks against The Prophet, but I think they have something in common: if your actions hurt no one, then you should be free to carry them out. Play nice. I'd say the same thing to the Taliban.

20121010-02

14:40 Ben

Photo: Today's Seafood Lunch at Apple

Austin's Chef Ray Trono has made headlines in this story on the first page of section D of the *Austin American Statesman* today: <http://www.statesman.com/s/life/>.

<http://www.statesman.com/news/entertainment/dining/chef-at-st-davids-church-serves-divine-lunch-to-do/nSWRQ/>.

Chef Anna Quattrochi shows up well in the crop on the actual, physical paper, too! Oh, my, are they going to be busy tomorrow...

Now, on with our regular programming:

Today's Menu -- once again, great choices; I am lured to Chef Patricia's King Salmon over orzo, figuring it'll be delightful, and also less devastating - even with pasta! - than beer-battered fried fish with French fries. Yup: an easy and proper choice.

This could be a dessert day. Yesterday, I noted that Chef Faith's ginger rose cream cake was so lovely I wanted to Hoover up the whole row; today, she's added a flourless cocoa crunch cream cake, featuring Vairhona chocolate. (Kathryn? Are you reading this? It's listed right above the snickerdoodles...) The poached pear toasted hazelnut tart will probably be gorgeous, too, which brings to mind that rule of Faith's Gauntlet: "Try the thing farthest from your norm that looks really good, and be amazed..."

[later]

Today, enjoyed Chef Patricia's excellent line-caught crispy-skin seared King Salmon filet over orzo pasta with a buttery sauce and sauteed spinach. Delicious! -- and the lovely filet was cooked with reverence to a moist, flaky perfection. Accompanied by pineapple lemonade, in accordance with my urologist's recommendation of a glass of lemonade per day, to help keep the stones at bay. Tough prescription, eh?

The Ginger Rose Cream Cake was delicious, not too big, not too sweet, and is gonna have to be my only dessert this week...



King Salmon over Orzo with Spinach, and Ginger Rose Cream Cake

20121010-03	14:43	SteveB	"Fort Wayne Makes a Revolutionary Transformation"
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"Fort Wayne Makes a Revolutionary Transformation" by Marian Kisch, NationofChange

Oct. 10, 2012, (<http://www.nationofchange.org/fort-wayne-makes-revolutionary-transformation-1349883996>)

When Robin Peterman came to Merle J. Abbett Elementary School in Fort Wayne, Ind., three years ago, the school had a 22 percent pass rate for state reading and math tests. Abbett was in the bottom five of the state. In addition, morale was low and "people felt beaten up and in survival mode."

But the school, as well as the rest of the Fort Wayne Community Schools (FWCS), has made tremendous progress since then—"a revolutionary transformation" according to Laura Cain, the district's program manager. In 2010 and 2011 the district made Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) and, in addition, earned an A rating from the Indiana Department of Education, according to its accountability grading system for districts. Also, the graduation rate has continued to surpass the state's rate for the last four years; in 2011 it was 88.1 percent as compared to the state's average of 85.7 percent.

FWCS' 31,000 students are some of the most diverse and disadvantaged in the state, speaking 80 different languages and dialects, with 70 percent qualifying for free or reduced-price lunch. In Abbett, almost all of its 320 students are African American and Hispanic; it also has the district's highest percent of English Language Learners (ELL).

How did this turnaround occur? A variety of forces came into play including support from Superintendent Wendy Robinson, the board of trustees, the Wallace Foundation and the HOPE Foundation. Ten years ago the Wallace Foundation worked on leadership improvement with Fort Wayne's principals.

HOPE has been working in Fort Wayne for the past four years, first as a pilot project, bringing its Courageous Leadership Academies (CLAs) to help develop and refine professional learning communities for better teaming, curriculum development, data analysis and culture building.

CLAs have also helped bring a common language to all the schools in the district and promoted sharing within and between schools. According to Pam Anderson, HOPE's project leader, HOPE customized its curriculum to meet the needs of Fort Wayne.

"A lot of what we did revolved around what was already going on in Fort Wayne," Carolyn Farrar, HOPE faculty leader, says. HOPE helped Fort Wayne work as a team to understand and track data. Data walls were displayed in lobbies and lounges to show how children were progressing throughout the year. These large colorful visuals showed how students moved forward in many aspects, such as test results—both state and local-- as well as attendance and other forms of progress.

#### Abbett Elementary School

As one of its first steps, Abbett Elementary staff members rated their school on HOPE's six principles to determine which areas needed the most attention. According to Peterman, family and community involvement was at the bottom of the list. Determined to change this, the school embarked on a number of projects: They invited community members into the schools, asked their impressions, made them know they are valuable. Abbett invited parents to several events including math game nights, where they showed them how to use manipulatives, gave them goody bags with samples to use at home with their children, and provided a meal as an incentive.

"We blazed a new trail with parent-teacher conferences," the principal says, which are attended by 97 to 100 percent of parents. After the conference, parents are directed to the gym to meet one-on-one with a staff member to go over their child's data, and set ambitious reading goals for the next year and a half, to help their child catch up. This has proven very successful.

Peterman has taken additional steps to communicate with parents: She sends a weekly newsletter to parents with information on data and tips on how to help their children. She has also partnered with a Hispanic association to teach English to the parents and to explain reading strategies in Spanish. All this is done to help raise their children's achievement.

"We're trying to walk the walk," Peterman says. "We're not just saying we care about your kids, we're trying to help the whole family." This includes providing information on health services as well as a Friday backpack filled with food to take home, courtesy of community sponsors and volunteers working through Blessings in a Backpack.

But it's not just parents. Students have had an attitude change as the school has pushed community service. Children are now involved in food can drives and raising money for Riley Children's Hospital.

The staff has also embraced this attitude, and regularly volunteers to help with scheduling, parents' nights and community partnerships. Peterman is enthusiastic about her staff: "We have really good people here, a dedicated staff with an urgent mission. They are inspired."

Abbett's nine-member Quality Improvement Team team meets once a month to talk about data, set new goals and assign leadership tasks. According to Peterman, "This is the real heart for making sure the school continues to develop and improve."

All Abbett students have data folders, with information on their attendance, behavior and test scores. They color in charts, know where they are and set goals for themselves. "Kids are empowered to know what they have control of and are encouraged to share information with their parents," Peterman says.

"HOPE has helped us by providing the framework," she adds. "We might have fabulous ideas, but we might forget one important component. We partner with other schools and share information. We are reminded that we have each other to rely on. That's really important."

And it has paid off. At Abbett, reading and math scores have soared, from 22 percent three years ago to 68 percent passing rate last year. And they are planning to continue that trend.

Peterman recalls an example of how things have changed from the student's perspective. A second grader walked into the outer office. "I said 'hi' and asked what he was doing here. He said he didn't know. His grandmother told him she was taking him to a dentist appointment. And his retort was: 'You interrupted my learning for that?'" How things have changed!

### Fort Wayne: District of Change

Peterman praises the changes in her school: "Abbett is now a place which is conducive to learning. It is a place where kids feel safe and cared for and parents know their children are benefiting and striving to reach their dreams."

Cain points out that "Fort Wayne is a district of change in many areas. We have completely redefined how we look and react to data. We place more emphasis on our School Improvement Plan and we've made great gains in student achievement because we follow the philosophy of 'what gets measured gets done.'"

(The HOPE Foundation is a leadership organization internationally recognized for re-culturing school communities and sustaining student success by collaborating with schools and districts on a long-term basis to build leadership capacity and ensure success. You can join HOPE at this year's Courageous Leadership Awards Gala in NYC on October 11.)

<a href="#">20121010-04</a> 15:20 Pam "No, You're Not Entitled to Your Opinion"
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It's not the truth simply because you think it is. This is a good article that many Americans (Michelle Bachman!) need to read.

"No, You're Not Entitled to Your Opinion" by Patrick Stokes, *The Conversation*

Oct. 5, 2012, (<http://theconversation.edu.au/no-youre-not-entitled-to-your-opinion-9978>)

Every year, I try to do at least two things with my students at least once. First, I make a point of addressing them as "philosophers" – a bit cheesy, but hopefully it encourages active learning.

Secondly, I say something like this: "I'm sure you've heard the expression 'everyone is entitled to their opinion.' Perhaps you've even said it yourself, maybe to head off an argument or bring one to a close. Well, as soon as you walk into this room, it's no longer true. You are not entitled to your opinion. You are only entitled to what you can argue for."

A bit harsh? Perhaps, but philosophy teachers owe it to our students to teach them how to construct and defend an argument – and to recognize when a belief has become indefensible.

The problem with "I'm entitled to my opinion" is that, all too often, it's used to shelter beliefs that should have been abandoned. It becomes shorthand for "I can say or think whatever I like" – and by extension, continuing to argue is

somehow disrespectful. And this attitude feeds, I suggest, into the false equivalence between experts and non-experts that is an increasingly pernicious feature of our public discourse.

Firstly, what's an opinion?

Plato distinguished between opinion or common belief (*doxa*) and certain knowledge, and that's still a workable distinction today: unlike "1+1=2" or "there are no square circles," an opinion has a degree of subjectivity and uncertainty to it. But "opinion" ranges from tastes or preferences, through views about questions that concern most people such as prudence or politics, to views grounded in technical expertise, such as legal or scientific opinions.

You can't really argue about the first kind of opinion. I'd be silly to insist that you're wrong to think strawberry ice cream is better than chocolate. The problem is that sometimes we implicitly seem to take opinions of the second and even the third sort to be unarguable in the way questions of taste are. Perhaps that's one reason (no doubt there are others) why enthusiastic amateurs think they're entitled to disagree with climate scientists and immunologists and have their views "respected."

Meryl Dorey is the leader of the Australian Vaccination Network, which despite the name is vehemently anti-vaccine. Ms. Dorey has no medical qualifications, but argues that if Bob Brown is allowed to comment on nuclear power despite not being a scientist, she should be allowed to comment on vaccines. But no-one assumes Dr. Brown is an authority on the physics of nuclear fission; his job is to comment on the policy responses to the science, not the science itself.

So what does it mean to be "entitled" to an opinion?

If "Everyone's entitled to their opinion" just means no-one has the right to stop people thinking and saying whatever they want, then the statement is true, but fairly trivial. No one can stop you saying that vaccines cause autism, no matter how many times that claim has been disproven.

But if 'entitled to an opinion' means 'entitled to have your views treated as serious candidates for the truth' then it's pretty clearly false. And this too is a distinction that tends to get blurred.

On Monday, the ABC's "Mediawatch" program took WIN-TV Wollongong to task for running a story on a measles outbreak which included comment from – you guessed it – Meryl Dorey. In a response to a viewer complaint, WIN said that the story was "accurate, fair and balanced and presented the views of the medical practitioners and of the choice groups." But this implies an equal right to be heard on a matter in which only one of the two parties has the relevant expertise. Again, if this was about policy responses to science, this would be reasonable. But the so-called "debate" here is about the science itself, and the "choice groups" simply don't have a claim on air time if that's where the disagreement is supposed to lie.

"Mediawatch" host Jonathan Holmes was considerably more blunt: "there's evidence, and there's bull-dust," and it's not part of a reporter's job to give bull-dust equal time with serious expertise.

The response from anti-vaccination voices was predictable. On the "Mediawatch" site, Ms. Dorey accused the ABC of "openly calling for censorship of a scientific debate." This response confuses not having your views taken seriously with not being allowed to hold or express those views at all – or to borrow a phrase from Andrew Brown, it **"confuses losing an argument with losing the right to argue."** Again, two senses of "entitlement" to an opinion are being conflated here.

So, next time you hear someone declare they're entitled to their opinion, ask them why they think that. Chances are, if nothing else, you'll end up having a more enjoyable conversation that way.

"Repeat After Me: Obama Cut the Deficit and Slowed Spending to Lowest Level in 50 Years" by Bob Cesca, Huffington Post

Oct. 10, 2012, ([http://www.huffingtonpost.com/bob-cesca/repeat-after-me-obama-cut\\_b\\_1955561.html?utm\\_hp\\_ref=politics](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/bob-cesca/repeat-after-me-obama-cut_b_1955561.html?utm_hp_ref=politics))

Illustrative of his contempt for the truth, Mitt Romney's campaign website continues to host the following statement: "Since President Obama assumed office three years ago, federal spending has accelerated at a pace without precedent in recent history."

On Friday, we discovered yet another reason why this is a super-colossal lie.

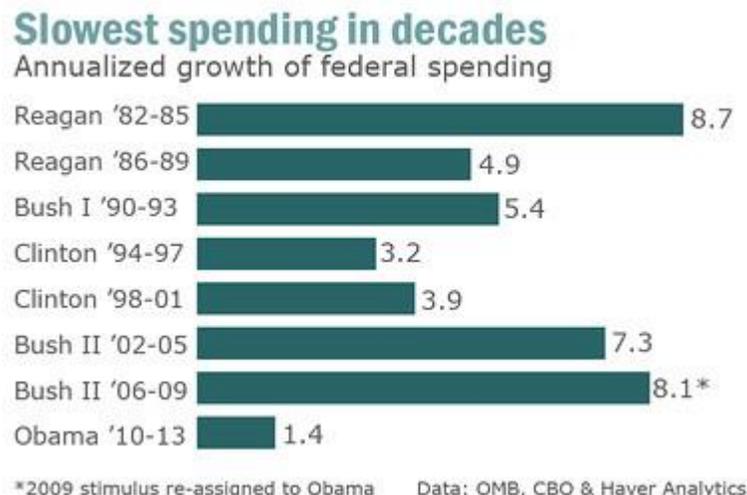
With the end of fiscal year 2012, the Congressional Budget Office announced the 2012 federal budget deficit: \$1.1 trillion. Taken purely at face value, this number is enormous. Yet every Democrat, and especially the Obama campaign, ought to be telling anyone who will listen: *Not only has the president cut the deficit by \$312 billion during his first term (so far), but he's cut the deficit by \$200 billion in the past year alone. And the CBO projected that the 2013 Obama budget, if enacted as is, would shrink the deficit to \$977 billion -- a four year total of nearly \$500 billion in deficit reduction.*

Okay, yeah, I get it. It's risky to mention the deficit, but not when you couch it in math and the facts.

As I've documented before, the CBO reported in January, 2009 that the federal budget deficit for that fiscal year, which began on October 1, 2008, was already \$1.2 trillion. President Obama's additional '09 spending added another \$200 billion to the deficit, bringing the total to \$1.412 trillion. Unprecedented and huge, but given the enormity of the financial crisis and the depth of the recession, there weren't many other options on the table. Add two wars into the mix and there you go.

But since then, deficit spending has dropped precipitously. Why? Chiefly because President Obama signed the Statutory Pay-As-You-Go Act in February, 2010, which mandates that new spending be offset with spending cuts or new revenue. Yes, a Democratic president and a Democratic Congress passed this legislation. Guess how many congressional Republicans voted for the law. Zero. Not one. Perhaps during this week's debate, Vice President Biden could ask Rep. Paul Ryan who voted against the bill.

Consequently, the president is responsible for the lowest government spending growth in 60 years, according to the *Wall Street Journal's* Market Watch.



Once again, Mitt Romney's website still contains the words: "Since President Obama assumed office three years ago, federal spending has accelerated at a pace without precedent in recent history." *Pants on fire times a thousand.*

Fact: the president's record is exactly the opposite of what Romney says. And how long ago was this statistic released by the *Wall Street Journal* and subsequently affirmed by fact checkers? Five months ago. On September 26, when asked about his record of mendacious claims, Mitt Romney told CNN's Jim Acosta, "We've been absolutely spot on. And any time there's been anything that's been amiss, we correct it or remove it." Oh yeah? Well, Mr. Romney, you missed a whopper.

Another whopper: during Romney's "winning" debate against the president last week, he claimed, "The president said he'd cut the deficit in half. Unfortunately, he doubled it." Another lie. Yes, the president said he'd cut the deficit in half -- but he absolutely did not double it. As I've outlined here, he's cut the deficit by 22 percent so far -- 35 percent by the end of 2013.

Furthermore, I can name two Democratic presidents who've cut the deficit through the duration of their presidencies: Clinton and Obama. And what about Republican presidents? Bush 43? He turned a \$200 billion surplus into a \$400 billion deficit by the end of his first term, and a \$1.2 trillion deficit by the end of his second term. Bush 41? No. Reagan? No. Ford? No. Nixon? No. The last Republican president who cut the deficit was Eisenhower. By the way, I'm sick of hearing the farcical line about Congress "controlling the purse strings." Any six-year-old child who's watched a Schoolhouse Rock cartoon knows the president signs all legislation before it becomes law, including appropriations bills. The House can't magically spend money without a presidential signature. Besides, if the president is to be blamed for the size of the deficit -- and the Republicans have been merciless on the president in this area in spite of reality, and their own party's record -- it's only fair that he should get credit when the deficit is reduced.

Yet without objections, the Romney campaign and the Republicans continue to champion their status as "fiscal hawks" even though the facts prove that to correlate "fiscal responsibility" and "Republican Party" is absurd on its face. Even though Romney's plan for the deficit and the economy is as shifty, murky and ambiguous as he is, there appears to be nothing -- absolutely nothing -- about the Romney plan that's any different from every Republican presidential plan in recent history, but we're supposed to believe that Romney will cut the deficit anyway. In fact, as we all know by now, Romney is proposing \$5 trillion in un-funded tax cuts, as well as massive increases in military spending, and, if Romney wins, you can bet the Republicans will jettison their deficit and debt hawkery into the next nearest memory hole to be forgotten until another Democrat enters the White House.

If the Obama campaign and the Democrats can talk about the deficit in these terms, it undercuts one of the leading Republican attacks and becomes a winning issue for the president. Plus it helps to cement the reality of *Mitt Romney, The Pathological Liar.*

<a href="#">20121010-06</a>	20:23	Dick	Fw: A Very Evil Human (George Soros)
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SteveB, what is your opinion on this email? Thanks.

[Source of original email unknown. -SteveB]

**When leaders lack views, ideas or opinions on the many issues our country faces they hold the door open for evil to enter. This article is about George Soros the puppet master and his worldly influence. The article is written by Steve Croft 60 Minutes; a very courageous man. I urge everyone to read this**

**article and to understand what the world is facing. We MUST have a strong leader at the top. Our future will be determined by how we vote on Nov. 6th. This is not a surprise to everyone but it is a reminder of the threat. DonO**

MUST read for all Americans....both Democrat and Republican. Please read through to the end. God help us.

Many of you have probably not heard of George Soros. I've learned a lot about him in the past few years, and this article really nailed it! Soros is the biggest roadblock for continuation of life in this country as we know it. This is the best, most concise accounting of his life and the evil things he has done around the world, and is doing here in the US. This is not a fairy tale! This piece is a bit long, but please don't miss a single word. If what's been happening in our country hasn't been frightening enough, this will justify your fright. Forgive me, Obama people, but this is a must read for everyone.

This explains a lot. Please read it all.....Americans need to stand up to the plate NOW. Keep our country in your prayers.

## A MUST READ FOR ALL TRUE AMERICANS.



Steve Kroft (born August 22, 1945) is an American journalist and a longtime correspondent for "60 Minutes". His investigative reporting has garnered him much acclaim, including three Peabody Awards and nine Emmy awards, one of which was an Emmy for Lifetime Achievement

**You can understand what is happening to our America after reading this.**

**May God have mercy upon our nation.**

\*\*\*\*\*

### **One Evil Human**

FROM STEVE KROFT ("60 Minutes")

Glenn Beck has been developing material to show all the ties that Soros has through the nation and world along with his goals. This article is written by Steve Kroft from "60 Minutes". It begins to piece together the rise of Obama and his behavior in leading the nation along with many members of Congress (in particular the Democrats, such as the election of Pelosi as the minority leader in

Congress).

If you have wondered where Obama came from and just how he quickly moved from obscurity to President, or why the media is "selective" in what we are told, here is the man who most probably put him there and is responsible. He controls President Obama's every move. Think this is absurd? Invest a few minutes and read this. You won't regret it.

Who is Obama? Obama is a puppet and here is the explanation of the man or demon that pulls his strings. It's not by chance that Obama can manipulate the world. After reading this and Obama's reluctance to accept help on the oil spill, you wonder if the spill is part of the plan to destroy the US ? "In history, nothing happens by accident. If it happened, you can bet someone planned it."/ Franklin Delano Roosevelt

Who Is George Soros? He brought the market down in 2 days. Here is what CBS' Mr. Steve Kroft's research has turned up. It's a bit of a read, and it took 4 months to put it together. "The main obstacle to a stable and just world order is the United States .  
"George Soros"

George Soros is an evil man. He's anti-God, anti-family, anti-American, and anti-good." He killed and robbed his own Jewish people. What we have in Soros, is a multi-billionaire atheist, with skewed moral values, and a sociopath's lack of conscience. He considers himself to be an elitist World class philosopher, despises the American way, and just loves to do social engineering and change cultures.

György Schwartz, better known to the world as George Soros, was born August 12, 1930 in Hungary. Soros' father, Tivadar, was a fervent practitioner of the Esperanto language. It was invented in

1887, and was designed to be the first global language, free of any national identity. The Schwartz's, who were non-practicing Jews, changed the family name to Soros, in order to facilitate assimilation into the Gentile population, as the Nazis spread into Hungary during the 1930s.

When Hitler's henchman Adolf Eichmann arrived in Hungary , to oversee the murder of that country's Jews, George Soros ended up with a man whose job was confiscating property from the Jewish population. Soros went with him on his rounds.

Soros has repeatedly called 1944 "the best year of his life." 70% of Mr. Soros's fellow Jews in Hungary, nearly a half-million human beings, were annihilated in that year, yet he gives no sign that this put any damper on his elation, either at the time or indeed in retrospect" During an interview with "Sixty Minute's" Steve Kroft, Soros was asked about his "best year."

KROFT: My understanding is that you went out with this protector of yours who swore that you were his adopted godson. SOROS: Yes. Yes.

KROFT: Went out, in fact, and helped in the confiscation of property from your fellow Jews, friends and neighbors. SOROS: Yes. That's right. Yes.

KROFT: I mean, that sounds like an experience that would send lots of people to the psychiatric couch for many, many, years. Was it difficult?

SOROS: No, not at all. Not at all, I rather enjoyed it.

KROFT: No feelings of guilt?

SOROS: No, only feelings of absolute power.

In his article, Muravchik describes how Soros has admitted to having carried some rather "potent messianic fantasies with me from childhood, which I felt I had to control, otherwise they might get me in trouble." Be that as it may. After WWII, Soros attended the London School of Economics, where he fell under the thrall of fellow atheist and Hungarian, Karl Popper, one of his professors. Popper was a mentor to Soros until Popper's death in 1994. Two of Popper's most influential teachings concerned "the open society," and Fallibilism.

Fallibilism is the philosophical doctrine that all claims of knowledge could, in principle, be mistaken. (Then again, I could be wrong about that.) The "open society" basically refers to a "test and evaluate" approach to social engineering. Regarding "open society" Roy Childs writes, "Since the Second World War, most of the Western democracies have followed Popper's advice about piecemeal social engineering and democratic social reform, and it has gotten them into a grand mess."

In 1956 Soros moved to New York City , where he worked on Wall Street, and started amassing his fortune. He specialized in hedge funds and currency speculation. Soros is absolutely ruthless, amoral, and clever in his business dealings, and quickly made his fortune. By the 1980s he was well on his way to becoming the global powerhouse that he is today.

In an article Kyle-Anne Shiver wrote for "The American Thinker" she says, "Soros made his first billion in 1992 by shorting the British pound with leveraged billions in financial bets, and became known as the man who broke the Bank of England . He broke it on the backs of hard-working British citizens who immediately saw their homes severely devalued and their life savings cut drastically,

almost overnight."

In 1994 Soros crowed in "The New Republic," that "the former Soviet Empire is now called the Soros Empire." The Russia-gate scandal in 1999, which almost collapsed the Russian economy, was labeled by Rep. Jim Leach, then head of the House Banking Committee, to be "one of the greatest social robberies in human history. "The "Soros Empire" indeed. In 1997 Soros almost destroyed the economies of Thailand and Malaysia. At the time, Malaysia's Prime Minister, Mahathir Mohammad, called Soros "a villain, and a moron." Thai activist Weng Tojirakarn said, "We regard George Soros as a kind of Dracula. He sucks the blood from the people."

The website Greek National Pride reports, "Soros was part of the full court press that dismantled Yugoslavia and caused trouble in Georgia, Ukraine and Myanmar [Burma] Calling himself a philanthropist, Soros' role is to tighten the ideological stranglehold of globalization and the New World Order while promoting his own financial gain. He is without conscience; a capitalist who functions with absolute amorality."

France has upheld an earlier conviction against Soros, for felony insider trading. Soros was fined 2.9 million dollars. Recently, his native Hungary fined Soros 2.2 million dollars for "illegal market manipulation." Elizabeth Crum writes that the Hungarian economy has been in a state of transition as the country seeks to become more financially stable and westernized. Soros deliberately driving down the share price of its largest bank put Hungary's economy into a wicked tailspin, one from which it is still trying to recover.

My point here is that Soros is a planetary parasite. His grasp, greed, and gluttony have a global reach. But what about America? Soros told Australia's national newspaper "The Australian." "

America , as the centre of the globalised financial markets, was sucking up the savings of the world. This is now over. The game is out," he said, adding that the time has come for "a very serious adjustment" in American's consumption habits. He implied that he was the one with the power to bring this about."

Soros: "World financial crisis was "stimulating" and "in a way, the culmination of my life's work."

Obama has recently promised 10 billion of our tax dollars to Brazil , in order to give them a leg-up in expanding their offshore oil fields. Obama's largesse towards Brazil came shortly after his political financial backer, George Soros, invested heavily in Brazilian oil (Petrobras).

Tait Trussel writes, "The Petrobras loan may be a windfall for Soros and Brazil , but it is a bad deal for the U. S. The American Petroleum Institute estimates that oil exploration in the U S could create 160,000 new, well-paying jobs, as well as \$1.7 trillion in revenues to federal, state, and local governments, all while fostering greater energy security and independence."

A blog you might want to keep an eye on is [SorosWatch.com](http://SorosWatch.com). Their mission: "This blog is dedicated to all who have suffered due to the ruthless financial pursuits of George Soros. Your stories are many and varied, but the theme is the same: the destructive power of greed without conscience. We pledge to tirelessly watch Soros wherever he goes and to print the truth in the hope that he will one day be made to stop preying upon the world's poor, that justice will be served."

Back to America. Soros has been actively working to destroy America from the inside out for some years now. People have been warning us. Two years ago, news sources reported that "Soros [is]

an extremist who wants open borders, a one-world foreign policy, legalized drugs, euthanasia, and on and on. This is off-the-chart dangerous." In 1997 Rachel Ehrenfeld wrote, "Soros uses his philanthropy to change or more accurately deconstruct the moral values and attitudes of the Western world, and particularly of the American people. His "open society" is not about freedom; it is about license. His vision rejects the notion of ordered liberty, in favor of a PROGRESSIVE ideology of rights and entitlements."

Perhaps the most important of these "whistle blowers" are David Horowitz and Richard Poe. Their book "The Shadow Party" outlines in detail how Soros hijacked the Democratic Party, and now owns it lock, stock, and barrel. Soros has been packing the Democratic Party with radicals, and ousting moderate Democrats for years. The Shadow Party became the Shadow Government, which recently became the Obama Administration.

Discover The Networks. org (another good source) writes, "By his [Soros'] own admission, he helped engineer coups in Slovakia , Croatia , Georgia , and Yugoslavia. When Soros targets a country for "regime change," he begins by creating a shadow government, a fully formed government-in-exile, ready to assume power when the opportunity arises. The Shadow Party he has built in America greatly resembles those he has created in other countries prior to instigating a coup."

November 2008 edition of the German magazine "Der Spiegel," in which Soros gives his opinion on what the next POTUS (President of the U. S. ) should do after taking office. "I think we need a large stimulus package." Soros thought that around 600 billion would be about right. Soros also said that "I think Obama presents us a great opportunity to finally deal with global warming and energy dependence. The U. S. needs a cap and trade system with auctioning of licenses for emissions rights."

Although Soros doesn't (yet) own the Republican Party, like he does the Democrats, make no mistake, his tentacles are spread throughout the Republican Party as well.

Soros is a partner in the Carlyle Group where he has invested more than 100 million dollars. According to an article by "The Baltimore Chronicle's" Alice Cherbonnier, the Carlyle Group is run by "a veritable who's who of former Republican leaders," from CIA man Frank Carlucci, to former CIA head and ex-President George Bush, Sr.

In late 2006, Soros bought about 2 million shares of Halliburton, Dick Cheney's old stomping grounds. When the Democrats and Republicans held their conventions in 2000, Soros held Shadow Party conventions in the same cities, at the same time. In 2008, Soros donated \$5,000,000,000 ( that's Five Billion ) to the Democratic National Committee, DNC, to insure Obama's win and wins for many other Alinsky trained Radical Rules Anti-American Socialist. George has been contributing a \$ billion plus to the DNC since Clinton came on the scene.

Soros has dirtied both sides of the aisle, trust me. And if that weren't bad enough, he has long held connections with the CIA. And I mustn't forget to mention Soros' involvement with the MSM (Main Stream Media), the entertainment industry (e. g. he owns 2.6 million shares of Time Warner), and the various political advertising organizations he funnels millions to. In short, George Soros controls or influences most of the MSM. Little wonder they ignore the TEA PARTY, Soro's NEMESIS.

As Matthew Vadum writes, "The liberal billionaire-turned-philanthropist has been buying up media properties for years in order to drive home his message to the American public that they

are too materialistic, too wasteful, too selfish, and too stupid to decide for themselves how to run their own lives."

Richard Poe writes, "Soros' private philanthropy, totaling nearly \$5 billion, continues undermining America's traditional Western values. His giving has provided funding of abortion rights, atheism, drug legalization, sex education,

MUST read for all Americans....both Democrat and Republican. Please read through to the end.  
God help us.

Many of you have probably not heard of George Soros. I've learned a lot about him in the past few years, and this article really nailed it! Soros is the biggest roadblock for continuation of life in this country as we know it. This is the best, most concise accounting of his life and the evil things he has done around the world, and is doing here in the US. This is not a fairy tale! This piece is a bit long, but please don't miss a single word. If what's been happening in our country hasn't been frightening enough, this will justify your fright. Forgive me, Obama people, but this is a must read for everyone.

[20121010-07](#) 20:49 SteveB Re: A Very Evil Human (reply to Dick, above)

Hey, at least they give him credit for being human!

Dick, see: <http://www.snopes.com/politics/soapbox/oneevilhuman.asp>.

Steve Kroft didn't write any of this and neither did Steve "Croft". And I doubt seriously that anything written which contains any of the following would ever be true:

1. "A must read *for all true Americans*".
2. "Glenn Beck has been developing material..."
3. "Obama is a puppet."

[20121010-08](#) 21:10 Marci Fw: Joke: Ghosts

A professor at Wayne State University in Detroit was giving a lecture on Paranormal Studies.

To get a feel for his audience, he asked, "How many people here believe in ghosts?"

About 90 students raised their hands.

"Well, that's a good start. Out of those who believe in ghosts, do any of you think you have seen a ghost?"

About 40 students raised their hands.

"That's really good. I'm really glad you take this seriously. Has anyone here ever talked to a ghost?"

About 15 students raised their hands.

"Has anyone here ever touched a ghost?"

Three students raised their hands.

"That's fantastic. Now let me ask you one question further...Have any of you ever made love to a ghost?"

Way in the back, Hamad raised his hand.

The professor took off his glasses and said, "Son, all the years I've been giving this lecture, no one has ever claimed to have made love to a ghost. You've got to come up here and tell us about your experience."

The Middle Eastern student replied with a nod and a grin, and began to make his way up to the podium. When he reached the front of the room, the professor asked, "So, Hamad , tell us what it's like to have sex with a ghost?" Hamad replied, "Shit, from way back there I thought you said goats."



<http://space.about.com/library/weekly/blpostersa.htm>



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

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## FRIENDS OF THE MIDDLE NEWSLETTER #246 — OCT. 12, 2012

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

**INDEX: Click here.**

### **Media of Lies**

(posted by Steven W. Baker / SteveB, Oct. 12, 2012)

If you think Fox News is bad, you might not love WorldNetDaily (WND). These are the guys who thought up many of the far Right emails we've debunked so many times in these pages. Now, I say, back at `em!

"Ever Wonder Where the Extreme Right's Conspiracy Theories and Paranoid Rumors Get Started? Meet WorldNetDaily" by Leah Nelson, AlterNet

Oct. 10, 2012, (<http://www.alternet.org/media/ever-wonder-where-extreme-rights-conspiracy-theories-and-paranoid-rumors-get-started-meet>)



**Did R0mney split his pants? Is he wearing underwear??? Maybe a butt plug? Notice his, uh, awkward smile...**

("News company" WorldNetDaily has pumped out staggering volumes of froth and nonsense, which then spreads to the rest of the Right's media echo chamber.)

WorldNetDaily (WND, <http://www.wnd.com>) describes itself as "an independent news company dedicated to uncompromising journalism, seeking truth and justice and revitalizing the role of the free press as a guardian of liberty." The online newspaper, which this year celebrated its 15th year in operation, is one of the "very few sources" martial artist and action film hero Chuck Norris (who happens to be a columnist) trusts for news and an operation that megachurch pastor Greg Laurie (also a columnist) says does "a service to God and Country."

WND is the brainchild of Joseph Farah, a self-described "radical" and longtime antigovernment propagandist and apologist for the Confederacy who believes "cultural Marxists" are plotting "to transform our political system, to change the way we think, to attack our values, to demean our faith in God, to reduce that shining city on the hill to the status of a drab public-housing project."

Together with a coterie of antigovernment "Patriots," anti-gay activists, white nationalists, Muslim-bashers, conspiracy theorists, end-times prophets and ultraconservative hardliners, Farah — who did not respond to requests to be interviewed for this article — has built WND into a modest media empire including a book imprint, an online subscription-only "intelligence resource," and a glossy, full-color monthly magazine. At press time, Alexa, which ranks websites, said WND was the 1,832nd most popular website in the world and the 423rd in the U.S. — just above the site for Nickelodeon and a few notches below Victoria's Secret.

WND's point of view is best described as a cross between the now-defunct supermarket tabloid *Weekly World News*, which was famous for reporting on Elvis sightings, and *The New American*, a monthly magazine published by the far-right, conspiracist John Birch Society. In its 15 years online, it has introduced readers to a smorgasbord of bizarre ideas, specializing in anti-gay, anti-Muslim, and anti-liberal propaganda; antigovernment conspiracy theories; and end-times prophecy.

It featured a six-part series claiming (falsely) that soybean consumption causes homosexuality and promoted Scott Lively's vile opus *The Pink Swastika*, which says that gays were behind the Holocaust. It has identified the first "leftist" as Satan, and declared that Muslims have a "20-point plan for conquering the United States by 2020." It has warned of secret plans to create a North American Union, advised readers to invest all their assets in gold, and promoted myriad, if conflicting, theories about when and how the world will end.

Its most enduring claim, by far, is that President Obama is constitutionally ineligible to serve as president because he supposedly is not a "natural-born" U.S. citizen.

WND's stable of writers includes "birther" conspiracist Jerome Corsi; Bob Unruh, a former Associated Press reporter who once sued his fifth-grade daughter's school after it forbade her to distribute promotional materials for his wife's "vacation bible school"; black neo-secessionist Walter E. Williams, who in a 2002 WND column wrote that the Civil War was an unconstitutional exercise of "federal abuse and usurpation;" and a panoply of other far-right and ultraconservative voices.

The online paper is also a launching pad for a new generation of extremists. Kevin DeAnna, founder of the white nationalist student group Youth for Western Civilization, was recently hired as marketing coordinator. DeAnna, 29, also has written articles for WND — including one that asserted that Earth Day falls on April 22 in order to honor Lenin's birthday. Another young pundit who benefits from WND's patronage is Jason "Molotov" Mitchell, 33, a self-declared "Christian Supremacist" who wants his co-religionists to reject "effeminized American Christianity" and start "advancing the Kingdom on earth."

Farah shares those sentiments. "I don't think the Scriptures teach us to passively wait for God to take care of the world. We are taught to occupy until he comes," he wrote in his 2003 book, *Taking America Back*. "Don't you think He wants us to reestablish the promises of America — one nation under God born of a creed?"

Despite — or perhaps because of — all this, WND has had unnerving success at injecting its agenda into the public sphere. Especially since the election of America's first black president sent the far right into paroxysms of anxiety, this far-right supermarket tabloid of the Internet has become a force to be reckoned with.

## From Left to Right

Joseph Francis Farah, 57, of Centreville, Va., is a former liberal activist who as a high school student in 1971 was arrested at a massive Washington, D.C., May Day anti-war demonstration, voted for George McGovern and Jimmy Carter (twice), and says he once volunteered to serve as a bodyguard for anti-war activist Jane Fonda. In the 1980s, while working his way up the journalism food chain to become editor of the now-defunct *Los Angeles Herald Examiner*, he became a devoted fan of Ronald Reagan, to whom his 2007 book, *Stop the Presses*, is dedicated.

He also found God and cultivated what he describes as a "Christian worldview." He claims that becoming a journalist was his response to the question, "What would Jesus do?" and says that his chief influences are Watergate muckrakers Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein; Matt Drudge of "The Drudge Report"; Ronald Reagan; and a book called *Marx & Satan*, which improbably claims that the author of *The Communist Manifesto* belonged to a Satanic cult.

Farah became the subject of national headlines in 1990, when he was hired as executive editor of California's conservative *Sacramento Union*, whose new owners hoped that fresh blood would help turn the struggling 139-year-old paper around. Instead, during Farah's 15 months at its helm, the *Union's* circulation dropped by more than 25% as he dragged it sharply to the right.

Under his direction, pro-choice advocates were described as "pro-abortion" and environmentalists were reportedly called "eco-fruities." The word "gay" was reportedly forbidden, replaced by "homosexual" — and once, in a column by the late David Chilton (who elsewhere wrote that "The Christian goal for the world is the universal development of Biblical theocratic republics, in which every area of life is redeemed and placed under ... the rule of God's law."), with "sodomite." Farah also convinced rising conservative radio star Rush Limbaugh (who had left Sacramento a few years earlier to take his show national) to write a daily column, and ran it on the paper's front page.

Journalist Daniel Carson described the *Union* as "a mouthpiece for the fundamentalist Christian right, preoccupied with abortion, homosexuals and creationism."

"[E]ach day seems to bring a bizarre new episode," he wrote in 1990. "Farah altered a news story to call the National Organization for Women a 'radical feminist group.' A front-page story speculated about whether the confrontation in the Persian Gulf is the political beginning of Armageddon."

Editors, managers and writers reportedly left in droves. "The feeling is it's not really an objective newspaper anymore," a former *Union* reporter told *The Washington Post* in 1990. "We didn't go into journalism to work for some slanted publication."

In October 1991, Farah resigned. Twenty-seven months later, the *Union* — which was at the time the oldest daily paper west of the Mississippi — closed its doors for good.

But Farah kept on writing. That same year, he founded the Western Center for Journalism (WCJ), a non-profit whose purpose was "to encourage more philosophical diversity in the news media." In 1994, WCJ was hit with a \$2 million libel suit for promoting a "report" suggesting that White House Deputy Counsel Vincent Foster had been the victim of foul play, rather than suicide. (The suit was later dismissed.) Farah also contributed occasional op-eds to respectable outlets like the *Los Angeles Times*, and ran a series of "watchdog" publications focused on liberal media and culture.

In May 1997, together with his wife, Elizabeth, Farah founded WorldNetDaily as a project of WCJ. In 1999, he used \$4.5 million in seed money from unnamed investors and incorporated WND as an independent for-profit company. It quickly became one of the most popular "news" sites on the Web.

## Taking Sides

Farah makes a lot of noise about WND's independence from political and partisan causes. "I've been a newsman my whole adult life" and "I believe the proper role of a newsman is to seek the truth without fear or favor," he wrote in

*Stop the Presses*. "Unlike many of my colleagues in the press, I have avoided political parties, organizations, and associations that could compromise my integrity."

As is so often the case, Farah's version of reality is unique.

According to research compiled by the Institute for First Amendment Studies, as of 1998, Farah was a member of the Council for National Policy (CNP), a highly secretive group that lobbies for hardline conservative positions. At that time, CNP's membership roster included many conservative heavyweights, among them Tom DeLay, Trent Lott, Jerry Falwell, Oliver North, Constitution Party co-founder Howard Phillips, and R.J. Rushdoony, father of Christian Reconstructionism. (Reconstructionism is an ultraconservative take on Christianity whose proponents seek to impose strict "biblical law" on the United States and have promoted the death penalty for "practicing homosexuals," adulterers, and "incorrigible" children).

Farah has spoken at numerous political events. He gave the keynote address at a 2004 homeschooling conference run by a religious-right organization called the Alliance for Separation of School and State. He was scheduled to be a featured guest at a 2007 conference run by Vision Forum Ministries, an ultraconservative outfit whose director Doug Phillips is the son of Constitution Party co-founder Howard Phillips. In a 1997 book available on the Vision Forum website, the younger Phillips described Robert Lewis Dabney (a Confederate chaplain who called blacks a "sordid, alien taint" marked by "lying, theft, drunkenness, laziness, waste") as "a man of extraordinary principle whose character remained unblemished throughout a long and distinguished career."

In 2010, Farah boycotted the Conservative Political Action Conference, the right's most important annual shindig, because it included an LGBT Republican group. He held his own conservative conference instead. Its lineup was a "Who's Who" of far-right luminaries including U.S. Rep. Michelle Bachmann (R-Minn.), former "Saturday Night Live" cast member Victoria Jackson, former U.S. Rep. Tom Tancredo (R-Colo.), anti-gay hate group leader and Christian Reconstructionist theologian Gary DeMar, and R.C. Sproul Jr., a mover-and-shaker in the theocratic Christian "patriarchy" movement and a prominent advocate of homeschooling.

WND's board members — who in addition to Farah and his wife Elizabeth include Wayne Johnson, Norman Book, James Clark, and Richard Botkin — are also politically involved.

Johnson, who has been on WND's board since 1999, is a Sacramento political consultant whose firm, according to TheRawStory, coordinated the campaign for California's Proposition 8, which sought to outlaw same-sex marriage in that state. Until June 2002, he was a board member of the Chalcedon Foundation, a Christian Reconstructionist outfit and anti-gay hate group.

Book, who joined the board in 2008, is WND's executive vice president of finance and technology. As an undergraduate at Stanford University, he co-founded The Stanford Review, which according to his LinkedIn profile was a conservative student weekly meant to "add balance to Stanford's stifling liberal atmosphere."

Clark, a board member since 1999, was difficult to track down. Based on the address he listed on WND's tax form, he appears to be a recently departed lobbyist for the American Bankers Association (ABA). According to his LinkedIn profile, he served as ABA liaison to the American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC), a controversial and highly secretive group of far-right state legislators and business lobbyists that writes and pushes model bills. One of them was the pro-gun "Stand Your Ground" law that authorities cited as their reason for not immediately recommending charges against George Zimmerman, the Florida man who shot and killed unarmed black teenager Trayvon Martin in February.

Least noteworthy is Botkin, a Sacramento-area financial advisor and former Marine who has been on the board since 1999 and is an occasional contributor to conservative candidates. According to ConWebWatch, he worked with Farah in 2004 during a short-lived effort to revive the *Sacramento Union* as a magazine. His book about the Vietnam War was published by WND.

From 2000 to 2002, the board also included Robert Beale, an MIT grad who made his money in computers, served as the Minnesota campaign manager for televangelist Pat Robertson's 1988 presidential bid, and eventually came to sympathize with the radical antigovernment "sovereign citizens" movement. In 2008, Beale was convicted of tax

evasion, conspiracy, and fleeing authorities, charges he attempted to evade first by hiding from the law and then by conspiring to intimidate the judge — who, he said, God had commanded him to “destroy” — by filing fraudulent liens and issuing fake “arrest warrants” against her.

### God, Guns and Armageddon

Like most well-trafficked websites, WND makes money through selling ad space and sending E-mails tempting subscribers with “special offers” from third parties.

In a May 2012 E-mail “from the desk of Joseph Farah,” the WND editor personally endorsed an offer from “the Millionaire Patriot” who was, he said, giving away “lifetime gun training memberships” to the first 500 subscribers to respond to his offer. The Millionaire Patriot is Ignatious Piazza, owner of Nevada’s Front Sight Firearms Training Institute and an accused con man. In 2007, Piazza settled for \$8 million dollars a class action lawsuit brought by previous subscribers to his membership scheme. The plaintiffs alleged that he was running a Ponzi scheme, had misrepresented the value of memberships, and had diverted money “for his own personal use and benefit, including his Hollywood career.”

None of this was mentioned in WND’s E-mail to subscribers. Instead, Farah wrote that he “can personally vouch for Dr. Piazza and his Front Sight Training Institute” and urged readers “to prepare for what may be coming in the next four years! NOW is the time to get armed and trained.”

In 2010, subscribers received an E-mail hawking a book titled “How to Survive the Collapse of Civilization”, which warned that terrorists might attack the U.S. power grid with an electromagnetic pulse device that “could throw America into the dark ages in a split second.” The next year, a message titled “Gun Control Imminent — Stock Up Now!” warned that the president was “secretly conspiring to strip American Citizens of the right to bear arms” and promised “Burnin Hot Deals” from USA Ammo (motto: “Ammunition with Attitude”).

And, in 2011, WND shilled for a publication titled “The Antichrist Identity” that claimed President Obama is a crypto-Communist “apostle” of the “New World Order” who is setting up the planet for a takeover by “Jewish Masonic” elites who will reduce the population by 5.5 billion and “enslave all of mankind under the thumb of a Jewish master race led by a world messiah of Jewish ancestry who is to rule from Jerusalem.”

That “The Antichrist Identity” also scoffed at the idea that Obama was not born in the United States — a conspiracy WND has been tirelessly pushing for years — apparently did not bother the marketing team that approved the promotional E-mail.

Truth (or even internally consistent conspiracy theories) is not WND’s strong suit. But then, objectivity and consistency are not Farah’s goals. As he spelled out quite explicitly in *Taking America Back*, what he really wants is to foment a “revolution” — ideally, bloodless — that would eradicate most of the federal government, push LGBT people back into the closet and prayer back into the classroom, and “return” America to its supposed roots in biblical law.

The federal government, Farah wrote in *Taking America Back*, has “no lawful power outside its limited jurisdiction” and can only “impose its will on local communities and in the various states ... through force of arms.” If Washington won’t “yield the power it has usurped from the states and from sovereign, self-governing individuals like you and me,” then “[i]t’s time to reconsider the idea of secession.”

The Civil War was really a “second war of independence” — and, “the motivations of many in the Confederacy were ... a desire to live up to the promises of the U.S. Constitution, to test the principle of a voluntary union, to promote self-government and the rights of states.”

Farah’s own formula for revolution is simple: Turn on, tune in, and drop out. “Find a good reliable source of news — like WorldNetDaily.com — and be informed.” Buy guns — “more than you think you need.” (He notes these are for self-defense and to “preserve freedom.”) And above all, withdraw your children from “government schools,” those “indoctrination centers” and “brainwashing hubs” run by “statists who seek to steal our children and make a mockery of the family.”

"There is no neutral ground in the spiritual warfare consuming this universe," he advises readers in the final sentences of *Taking America Back*. "Now stand up and join me in taking America back."



[20121011-01](#) 10:45 Pam Re: A Very Evil Human (reply to Dick, FotM Newsletter #245)

If you want to know what George Soros actually thinks, read his recent articles in the *New York Review of Books*. The truth is, Soros was traumatized by the Holocaust and has made it his life's work to promote democracy around the world. I don't know enough about him to know whether he's a saint or not--probably not--but I do not believe he is the evil genius depicted in "Steve Kroft's" purported essay.

<http://www.nybooks.com/contributors/george-soros/>

[20121011-02](#) 12:26 SteveB "Why is America 'The Sole Bright Spot' in World Economy?"

"Why is America 'The Sole Bright Spot' in World Economy?" by Joe Conason, NationofChange

Oct. 11, 2012, (<http://www.nationofchange.org/why-america-sole-bright-spot-world-economy-1349968871>)

Unemployment is still too high, income is still too low and the recovery is still much too slow — but the United States is faring considerably better than other developed nations against the threat of a renewed recession.

Don't believe it? Maybe you should stop listening to the right-wing propaganda machine, which has been trash talking the U.S. recovery ever since Barack Obama's inauguration, and start paying attention to economic analysts who know what they're talking about — and provide hard data to back up their findings.

They provide a hard, factual, real-world context for our often-absurd political debate, especially as the presidential election approaches.

Every few months, a fresh report appears showing that the U.S. recovery is continuing and even strengthening, despite stagnation and austerity in Europe that drag down the entire global economy. Last June, the Organization

for Economic Cooperation and Development noted that the U.S. recovery was gaining momentum, in contrast to its weak trading partners, despite continuing problems in housing and construction and its report praised the Obama administration's policy initiatives on employment, the budget and taxation.

Now the latest pronouncement comes from the *Financial Times*, the London-based business daily, and the Brookings Institution, a centrist Washington think-tank, which jointly declared over the Columbus Day weekend that the U.S. remains "the brightest spot in the world economy."

Their assessment is based on a comprehensive worldwide report known as TIGER, or Tracking Indices for the Global Economic Recovery, which combines measurements of real economic activity, financial data and surveys of business and consumer confidence. Using advanced statistical methodology, TIGER illustrates the simultaneous movements of all kinds of numbers that tend to be measured very differently in various countries.

What those numbers tell us now was summed up by the *Financial Times* on its front page last Monday under the headline "US defies threat of global recession."

Within those few words lie a powerful argument against changing policies, and a presidential administration, that have kept us afloat in a whirlpool of drowning countries.

"The global economic recovery is on the ropes, battered by political conflicts within and across countries, lack of decisive policy actions, and governments' inability to tackle deep-seated problems, such as unsustainable public finances that are stifling growth," said Eswar Prasad, a Brookings senior fellow and creator of the TIGER index.

"The U.S. economy remains the sole bright spot, with economic activity, employment and financial markets all showing unexpected although still modest strength."

It is sobering to realize how fragile our present progress may be, given the recessionary pressures around the world. Global demand remains too feeble to promote a strong and steady recovery overall, despite continuing efforts by the central banks in the U.S., Europe, and Asia.

The TIGER data, compiled from the Group of 20 nations, shows worrisome deterioration. It was released on the eve of the annual meetings of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund in Tokyo, where finance ministers and central bankers will discuss how to stimulate growth and forestall another recession.

The *Financial Times* also quoted leaked IMF data indicating that global growth projections for this year will be revised downward, from 3.4 percent to 3.3 percent, and for next year from 3.9 percent to 3.6 percent. But that is only another strong argument for the U.S. to avoid the same errors that have hobbled recovery abroad.

Favorable comparison with other nations doesn't provide jobs for the unemployed or save an over-mortgaged home from foreclosure, of course. But in a faltering world economy, America's relative growth and stability reinforce President Obama's argument that his policies are working far better than the alternative offered by Republican Mitt Romney.

And the incessant criticism by Romney loses credibility if the U.S. economy is truly outperforming the rest of the developed world — especially those nations pursuing the austerity policies advocated by Romney and his running mate, the budget-slashing Rep. Paul Ryan. Will we really do better by imitating the United Kingdom and other nations where those policies have already failed?

<http://redriverbreeze.blogspot.com/>



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

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## FRIENDS OF THE MIDDLE NEWSLETTER #247 — OCT. 15, 2012

*Welcome to always lively political discussion and whatever else comes up.*  
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**INDEX: Click here.**

### **An Interesting Little Ride Over the Cliff**

(posted by Steven W. Baker / SteveB, Oct. 15, 2012)

No matter what happens in the election, you can be pretty sure that neither side is going to win a convincing victory. So, barring some unforeseen miracle, the Tea Party will get their dream Christmas present, and all the rest of America will lose. The death of compromise and reason are not without consequence for the nation.

"How January's Fiscal Cliff Turns Into a Gentle Hill by February (or March)" by Robert Reich, NationofChange

Oct. 13, 2012, (<http://www.nationofchange.org/how-january-s-fiscal-cliff-turns-gentle-hill-february-or-march-1350096153>)



These are awkward days for deficit hawks who believe the American economy can get back to health only if the nation gets its fiscal house in order. If they get their wish, the economy goes over a cliff.

Regardless of what happens Election Day, at the beginning of next year more than \$600 billion in tax increases and spending cuts automatically go into effect. That's equivalent to about 5 percent of the entire U.S. economy, more than the projected growth of the whole gross domestic product next year.

The problem is, if we fall off this fiscal cliff we plunge into recession. That's because the cliff withdraws too much demand from the economy too quickly, at a time when unemployment is still likely to be high.

The Congressional Budget Office projects real economic growth will drop at an annual rate of 2.9 percent in the first half of 2013, and unemployment will rise to 9.1 percent by the end of next year.

As Spain and Great Britain have demonstrated, launching fiscal austerity at a time when a nation's economic capacity is substantially underutilized causes the economy to contract. This makes the debt even larger in proportion to the size of the economy. Rather than reassure global lenders and investors, it spooks them more.

America is about to fall off the fiscal cliff because Democrats and Republicans in Congress haven't been able to agree on a plan for long-term deficit reduction – and this failure will trigger automatic spending cuts in January. Meanwhile, the temporary tax cuts enacted by former President George W. Bush in 2001 and 2003, and extended for two years by President Obama, will run out December 31st, as will the President's temporary jobs measures – a payroll-tax holiday and extended unemployment benefits.

In a rational world, deficit reduction on this scale wouldn't happen until the economy is once again healthy – when unemployment has dropped to below 6 percent and economic growth is back to at least 3 percent. These would be sensible triggers.

But hyper-polarized Washington hasn't shown itself capable of rational behavior. Democrats and Republicans have been so much at each others' throats that whenever one side senses the other wants (or fears) something more, the party that doesn't want or fear it as much has a bargaining advantage in an ongoing game of chicken.

This is why the nation is heading over the cliff – or, more accurately, appears to be heading that way. Congressional Democrats have concluded Republicans are more afraid than they are of going over it because the pending tax increases will fall most heavily on America's wealthy, and half the spending cuts would come out of the defense budget. (Republicans, you may have noticed, are particularly solicitous of the wealthy and of defense contractors.)

So most Democrats have decided to wait it out in order to maximize their bargaining power in negotiations over how to reduce the long-term deficit. They want a deal that raises taxes only on America's wealthy and doesn't substantially alter Medicare, and Social Security — which is the opposite of what Republicans want.

Democrats also reason that, once the Bush tax cut has been terminated, Republicans won't be able to resist an offer to reduce taxes on the middle class (those earning \$250,000 or less). After all, Republicans have pledged to vote for any and all tax cuts. Once Democrats get the best deal they can, they'll make it retroactive to January 1.

As a practical matter, then, negotiations over America's budget deficit will drag on into the new year, right over and beyond the fiscal cliff. A deal might not be struck until February, or even March.

But because everyone will know that the final compromise won't be nearly as draconian – and is going to be retroactive to the start of the year — the cliff won't feel like much of a cliff. In actual effect it will be more like a hill whose slope remains uncertain but will almost surely be gradual.

With any luck, by the time significant tax increases and spending cuts take permanent effect, unemployment will already have dropped and growth accelerated. In other words, the irrational and irascible American political process may come up with a timetable for reducing the budget deficit that's surprisingly sensible.

House-made spicy remoulade sauce, butter lettuce, sliced heirloom tomatoes - each one slice a different variety - with über-fresh alligator chunks deep, deep fried to crunchy crispiness, served on traditional Hoagie roll, golden-baked tater wedges with tasty house-made slaw, and a garnish of pickled green beans. Delicious! And every morsel as fresh as fresh can be. Very fresh alligator is very mild, and to me, tastes more like very un-fishy fish that has the texture of chicken. Quite tasty, and because it is so mild, probably works well with almost any cuisine's seasonings. Of course, Cajun alligator preps are a US tradition, and with the spicy remoulade, that's what we had here: as beautiful as it was fine eating, Chef Kelly put a visual delight on my plate:



from Esther Kipkalya:

Hello My Dear One,

How are you doing today , Hope you are in perfect condition? Please i apologies with you to exercise a little patience and read through my letter, i feel quite safe dealing with you in this important business , i know my letter will come to you as a surprise because we have never meet for the first time, but i really like to have a good relationship with you because i have a special reason why i decided to contact you, I decided to contact you due to the urgency of my situation here, My name is Esther Kipkalya Kones, 25yrs old female originated from Kenya in East Africa.

My Father was the former Kenyan Road Minister and Assistant Minister of Home Affairs Lorna Laboso had been on board the Cessna 210, which was headed to Kericho and crashed in a remote area called Kajong'a, in western Kenya, After the burial of my beloved father, my wicked stepmother and uncle conspired there self together and sold my father's property which the shared the money among themselves and live nothing for me, fortunately one faithful morning, as i was cleaning my late father bed room i found an important documents which my late beloved father use to deposit huge amount of money in one bank in Burkina Faso with my name as the next of kin so i

travelled to Burkina Faso since is a nearby country to withdraw the money for a better life so that i can take care of myself and start a new life.

But on my arrival to the bank in Burkina Faso, the Branch Manager of the Bank whom i met in person told me that my father's instruction to the bank is that the money would only be release to me when i am married or present a trustee foreigner who will help me invest the money overseas, i am in search of an honest and reliable person who will help me and stand as my foreign trustee so that i will present him to the Bank for transfer of the money to his bank account overseas and i have chosen to contact you after my prayers and i believe that you will not betray my trust.

You may wonder why i am so soon revealing myself to you without knowing you, To me i will say that my spirit and mind convinced me that you may be the true person to help me, I will like to disclose much to you if you can help me to relocate to your country because my stepmother have threaten many times to assassinate me due to her wickedness and jealousy's because she has no issue for my father since she was married after the accident that killed my mother years back, The amount of the money deposited is(\$8.5 USD) Million United State Dollars, the Branch manager whom i met in person have confirmed to me that the money is there and that i am the next of kin but the only thing he told me is that my father's instruction to the bank is that the money would only be release to me when i present a trustee foreigner who will help me and invest the money overseas, and he advice me to look for a honest and reliable person who will represent me as my trustee so that their bank will release the money to me.

However, you will help by recommending a nice University in your country so that i can complete my studies. It is my intention to compensate you with 40% of the total money for your efforts and kindness services and the balance shall be my capital investment in your country. As soon as i receive your positive response showing your interest i will inform the bank that i am ready to present a foreign trustee who will receive the fund on my behalf.

Please i want you to keep this only to your self for now until the bank transfer the fund. I beg you not to disclose it till i come over because i am afraid of my stepmother who has threatened to kill me and have the money alone ,I thank God today that am out from my country (KENYA) but now In (Burkina Faso) where the money is deposited.

Thanks for your patient and understanding hope to hear from you .God Bless you.

Yours forever friend, Miss Esther Kipkalya Konse



Touches the heart! This is a worthwhile story. Please read it to the end. It has a powerful message for us all.

[Source of original email unknown. -SteveB]

This is for all the grandfathers out there and anyone who's ever had one.

Last week, I took my grandchildren to a restaurant. My six-year-old grandson asked if he could say grace. As we bowed our heads he said, "God is good, God is great. Thank you for the food, and I would even thank you more if Grandpa gets us ice cream for dessert. And liberty and justice for all! Amen!"

Along with the laughter from the other customers nearby, I heard a woman remark, "That's what's wrong with this country. Kids today don't even know how to pray. Asking God for ice cream! Why, I never!"

Hearing this, my grandson burst into tears and asked me, "Did I do it wrong? Is God mad at me?"

As I held him and assured him that he had done a terrific job, and God was certainly not mad at him, an elderly gentleman approached the table. He winked at my grandson and said, "I happen to know that God thought that was a great prayer."

"Really?" my grandson asked.

"Cross my heart," the man replied.

Then, in a theatrical whisper, he added (indicating the woman whose remark had started this whole thing), "Too bad she never asks God for ice cream. A little ice cream is good for the soul sometimes."

Naturally, I bought my grandchildren ice cream at the end of the meal.

My grandson stared at his for a moment, and then did something I will remember the rest of my life.

He picked up his sundae and, without a word, walked over and placed it in front of the woman. With a big smile he told her, "Here, this is for you. Shove it, you grouchy old witch!"

Touches the heart, don't it? ;-(())

<a href="#">20121014-02</a> 11:13 SteveB "Why Conservatives Don't Really Want the U.S. to Run Like a Business"
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"Why Conservatives Don't Really Want the U.S. to Run Like a Business" by Jordan Weissmann, *The Atlantic*

Oct. 14 2012, ([http://www.theatlantic.com/business/archive/2012/10/why-conservatives-dont-really-want-the-us-to-run-like-a-business/263496/?google\\_editors\\_picks=true](http://www.theatlantic.com/business/archive/2012/10/why-conservatives-dont-really-want-the-us-to-run-like-a-business/263496/?google_editors_picks=true))

Earlier this week, Florida timeshare mogul David Siegel sent an email to his company's 7,000 employees imploring them to vote for Mitt Romney. He didn't quite threaten their jobs; instead, Siegel argued that if Obama raised taxes on the wealthy any time in the next four years, it would be so devastating that'd he'd be forced to start laying people off. The letter was published on Gawker, and now Siegel, never a bashful sort -- he and his wife are building a 90,000-square-foo house they've nicknamed Versailles, after all -- has explained himself to Bloomberg *Businessweek*.

"If only businessmen voted in the election, Romney would win 99 to 1," he told the magazine. "The United States is like a big company, and we need a CEO to run it."

This is a curious metaphor that's worth pondering for a bit. Republicans are fond of saying government should run more like a business, which presumably means it should keep an eye on costs and strive to balance its budget, even if that means cutting services we all like. They repeat this nostrum often enough that "The Daily Show" dedicated a whole segment to skewering the idea. (Spoiler: we're firing Wyoming.)

But running the whole country as a business? That's a different notion altogether, and one that would probably require abandoning some very dear conservative principles.

Think, for a moment, about what corporations are. They exist to make a return for shareholders and are generally managed from the top down. Every few months, a CEO has to ask themselves: "Are my investors richer than they were four quarters ago?" If the answer is yes, chances are they've done their job. If the answer is no, it's their obligation to cut costs and boost revenue. Once the boss comes up with a strategy for making it happen, it's everybody else's task to implement it.

Upshot: They're dictatorships that turn a profit.

This is not how most people envision the United States, thankfully, and especially not conservatives. We're a messy democracy that leaves much in our economy up to chance (or, if you prefer, the market). There's no official growth target for the economy. The Federal Reserve can set all the employment benchmarks it wants, and nobody else is required to play along. Congress can tell the president to take his jobs plan and shove it. Corporations can take tax cuts designed to spur hiring and spend them on fat dividend checks for shareholders instead.

Tim Cook, by contrast, doesn't have to worry about Apple's R&D department using its design budget on catering.

There are countries out there that do run themselves more like businesses. We just don't emulate them. They have heavy-handed industrial policies geared at cultivating individual sectors of the economy while keeping employment and trade surpluses high. China sets explicit targets on everything from GDP to education to the number of movie screens around the country, then helps make it happen by directing banks to hand out low interest loans to state-owned enterprises. Once upon a time, Japan's powerful government bureaucrats helped transform their country into the world's most fearsome exporter. We started calling their corporate giants "Japan, Inc."

This all may sound vaguely familiar to you. With his clean energy programs and proposals to subsidize manufacturing, President Obama has pursued a diet version of these industrial policies. But even those relatively modest stabs at industrial policy have gotten push-back, most of all from Republicans. The majority of Americans, for better or worse, don't really seem to want the United States to run like a business. Nor, I imagine, does David Siegel.

<a href="#">20121014-03</a> 12:28 SteveB "Who Hijacked the World's Greatest Economy?"
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"Who Hijacked the World's Greatest Economy?" by Thomas Magstadt, NationofChange

Oct. 14, 2012, (<http://www.nationofchange.org/who-hijacked-world-s-greatest-economy-1350221836>)

Revolutions typically start with a theory and talk and transition into practice and political action. They almost always end in disaster for the societies they disrupt and the economies they destroy. That's the story of the French Revolution and Russia's October Revolution, but not the American Revolution, which had a happier ending – until now.

What we are currently witnessing looks worryingly like the end of the American Dream for most of us and, in a real sense, the last act in the America Revolution. What started back in 1776 remained a work in progress until a) the Civil War freed the slaves; and b) women and African-Americans finally won the right to vote after World Wars I and II, respectively. But, within a decade of extending the franchise, preparations to undermine its effects – and prevent the wider distribution of wealth it implied – were in full swing.

It started with two University of Rochester business-school professors, Michael Jensen and William Meckling, and a theory – the so-called "Theory of the Firm" published in the obscure, academic *Journal of Financial Economics* in 1976. It debunked the old corporate model as unsuited to the new realities of the emerging global economy; and it offered a new model that called for a wholesale restructuring of the corporate commanding heights of the economy. The declining competitiveness of US business and industry was proof the old model was no longer working. It found the separation of ownership and management to be at the heart of the problem and the underlying cause of poor strategic planning and operations. CEOs were too quick to make concessions to unions, not cost-conscious enough, and too reluctant to streamline operations, adopt new technologies or adapt to globalization.

When the managers and owners are one and the same, they can move fast, do whatever they please, and aren't accountable to anyone. All you need is "leverage" (lots of privately borrowed money). Out of this theory sprouted the seedlings that grew into today's corporate raiders – the private equity firms like Bain Capital and investment-bank behemoths like JP Morgan and Goldman Sachs.

And now that the bubble has burst and the middle-class has been made to pay for billion dollars worth of bailouts to banks and major corporations, now that hundreds of factories have been closed and thousands of jobs lots, now

that foreclosures have disrupted the lives of families from coast-to-coast – now the old white titans of industry have the audacity – nay, the indecency – to blame a black man, Barack Obama, for everything.

Everything.

To say it's irresponsible of the financial wheeler-dealers who caused the problem is a gross understatement. These are the very individuals who got rich by jumping on the high-speed train that took the American economy from a model of profitability based on quality products and competitive prices to one based on leveraged transactions – mega-million dollar deals made behind closed doors with no accountability to any public authority.

This transformation ultimately led us to the derivative economy that crashed within a period of less than a quarter of a century. We have Wall Street, along with the Harvard Business School and guys like Willard Mitt Romney to thank for the reinventing of the US economy, financialization of business, and the so-called "Third Industrial Revolution". And, by the way, Barack Obama had nothing to do with it.

Nothing.

Romney's private equity fortune amassed during his tenure as Bain Capital's boss is only one example of how business in the US was transformed from organization-based (corporations that lived and died by the quality of the products and services they provided) to transaction-based ("consulting firms" engaged in private deal-making to avoid regulation and transparency, hostile takeovers, leveraged buy-outs, restructuring schemes, lay-offs, and ruthless pursuit of quick profits). It's a transformation that made a few people very, very rich, and put most of us very, very much at risk – our homes, jobs, savings, and pensions . If Obama is to blame for anything it's for talking about hope in 2008 at a time when millions of Americans – poor and middle class alike – were about to lost it.

In the brave new economy the only thing that defines success or failure is the bottom lines for the investors and owners (one and the same) of ephemeral companies constantly moving across an ever-changing commercial landscape and providing no measurable benefit to consumers, workers, or the society they exploit. If anything good and lasting comes out of this election let's hope it's the truth about who hijacked the US economy and how they did it. Never mind why (greed is nothing new). The key to finding a solution is understanding the problem.

20121014-04	12:43	Bill	Reunion in Greencastle
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Forwarding a photo of an impromptu dinner of Greencastellians you know, taken Oct. 12. KenG had come in from Bellingham, WA, and others, including SteveG of Yakima, WA, happened also to be available. KenE and spouse had planned to attend also, but he came down with appendicitis, having the offending item removed that morning. Venue of the dinner was Almost Home, which is on the north side of the square in Greencastle; it was pretty darn good. Rusty's wife Carolyn took the photo.



20121014-05 23:59 SteveB Photo: The Great Gulf, White Mountains, New Hampshire

[http://rohland.homedns.org:8008/at/at\\_NHsection3/AtPicturesAjax.aspx?page=AtPictures4](http://rohland.homedns.org:8008/at/at_NHsection3/AtPicturesAjax.aspx?page=AtPictures4)



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

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## FRIENDS OF THE MIDDLE NEWSLETTER #248 — OCT. 16, 2012

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

**INDEX: Click here.**

### **My Political Muse...**

(posted by MarthaH, Oct. 16, 2012)



My political muse has been going, and my irritation growing. That is not designed to be poetry, just fact. We have the country divided along philosophical lines but we also have the, I am VERY SORRY to say, racial ones as well. Fact is fact, hatred is hatred, fear is fear, unknowns are possible to make knowns through education, my favorite observation. But why do some not bother to make the effort? Sound bites are easier, lies believable. The liars, in many cases, laugh all the way to the bank.

Some of us have taken the responsibility to educate ourselves on other things besides our immediate needs in life. Others matter, other ways are refreshing, I believe, for our souls, and getting out "there" to see the greater world is necessary. Yet we have a (too large!) portion of our society that thinks its is the only way. And they are the hard-core who want to inflict theirs on all while those at the other end of the spectrum are willing to share the culture and let all decide for themselves and co-exist in those rights. Then we have the FEW in the middle, the "swing voters" who list as the wind blows. Witness the surge for Romney after the first debate. Can 90 minutes of non-debate debate really make up their "minds?" I think they want the easy/mindless way out! A sound bite of a commercial, if you will...and I am off to shop. Facts are facts, emotion is emotion, easy is easy. Now I know? PLEASE. No one TV show makes up a campaign, people.

In the olden days when folks read true journalism and had to make more effort than a remote to "learn" about a campaign, they had to use their brains to sort through. No live pictures, no right/wrong tie, no "looks" or all that! What would Lincoln and Douglass say about training for a debate? IF it were a REAL debate instead of a show! Today when one man who has the answers as to what is really going on in the seriously flawed world has to stand before a camera and discuss/parse...he is the in defense of things we can't know as outsiders. The out who wants in doesn't know what he is getting IF he wins and we definitely don't know what he would do in those cases. But 90 minutes tells the few who will decide what we get? All we really have on the out group, at the moment, is their history. A lot of the problems with that began with hanging chads and the US Supreme Court in the 2000 election, unfortunately. Or am I tainted by life experiences and study?

I have to admit my personal answer to the frustrations is to avoid it all. Too much is at stake, and the vision we need to follow has been stymied for four years by those who voted to "get Obama" at any cost.... At the cost of the future, and I can't stand to watch the theatrics. It smells so much of Rove who is silent enough to be dangerous while others flap their lips and fan the racism.

There, I feel better in having ranted for you!



20121015-01 09:04 Pam Re: My Political Muse... (reply to MarthaH, above)

I totally agree with you, Martha. You describe our despicable current situation very well. I am not watching the debates and I avoid the TV ads as much as possible. The whole do-and-pony show makes me sick.

The other day I saw Christia (forget her last name for the moment) on Stephen Colbert, talking about her new book *Plutocrats: The Rise of the Rich and the Fall of Everyone Else*. This morning I heard her interviewed on NPR, and she was able to go into more detail. It was pretty chilling. She talked to lots of the super-wealthy, not the ones who inherited their riches but those who had "done it themselves." She assumed initially that because they knew how hard it was to get where they were they'd have sympathy and/or empathy for those who were still trying. Not so. What they had was mostly contempt. She quoted one man who said, "The lowest paid American worker is the most overpaid worker in the world."

There is less equality and less social mobility, much less, than we had in the 'fifties, when the middle class thrived, and the super rich were few. Now there are lots of multi-millionaires and billionaires, and they're all over the globe. Marx's prediction of the withering away of the nation-state and the rise of global, rather than national, alliances is, ironically, coming true. Only it's not the workers of the world who are uniting; it's the super rich. Another

discovery was just how out of touch these people are. One man was asked to give some financial advice to a friend's kid and his wife. The advisor said, "They only had \$10 million saved. How are they possibly going to live on that?" The super rich, according to this book, will go to great lengths to save a couple of percentage points on their taxes, and as we all know money and power rise, like some poison cream, to the top. If this trend continues, the great American experiment will fall apart, just as Plato predicted in "The Republic." The 99% or 47% (take your choice) will revolt, and who knows what will follow the chaos?

[20121015-06](#) 18:39 Art Re: My Political Muse... (reply to Pam & MarthaH, above)

I think the issue will be "Can average people bring down the rich and powerful without a violent revolution?" This election may well serve as a benchmark for that question. Actually, we have done it previously. The nation was headed that way in the late 1800's when Roosevelt and others, with "Trust Busting" and other actions, managed to level things out, but not before a lot of violent riots and strikes. The French and Russian revolutions serve as examples of the extreme. The rich simply don't get it. I am not sure I can even get into their minds, but they clearly march to the beat of a different drum. They really do think they are superior and deserve to rule. Romney and most of his friends really don't care a hoot about the average citizen and only play the game because, in this current society, they have to. Of that I am sure.

[20121015-08](#) 10:48 SandyI Re: My Political Muse... (reply to Art, above)

Ken Follett's *The Fall of Giants* about WW I is about this very theme and follows the rich in England, Russia, Germany and somewhat in France. The most chilling part to me was when the Germans held the top of a hill and the French and English were at the bottom trying to take the hill. The battle went on for months (years) and the "leaders" kept sending those troops into certain death as if they weren't even human beings that were going to die. Some of the things the wealthy say about the miners in Wales and the troops are unbelievable.

Follett's books are tomes but *The Fall* was a rather quick reading considering it's almost 1,000 pages. His book about WW II was just released in hardback. I'll wait for Nook or paperback. Too hard to read a book that big in bed.

**I was taught to respect my elders. It's just getting harder to find them.**

[20121015-02](#) 09:15 SteveB "Life of a Salesman: Selling Success When the American Dream Is Downsized"

The American dream looking threadbare...This is only one story among many more tragic stories. Things just ain't what they used to be... But to what other end could nearly constant grown and the god of selfish materialism take us?

"Life of a Salesman: Selling Success When the American Dream Is Downsized" by Eli Saslow, *The Washington Post*

Oct. 7, 2012, ([http://www.washingtonpost.com/national/life-of-a-salesman-selling-success-when-the-american-dream-is-downsized/2012/10/07/e2b34aac-1033-11e2-acc1-e927767f41cd\\_print.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/national/life-of-a-salesman-selling-success-when-the-american-dream-is-downsized/2012/10/07/e2b34aac-1033-11e2-acc1-e927767f41cd_print.html))

He had always managed to find optimism in even the worst circumstances, and here was another chance: a heat advisory, 98 degrees and rising at 11 a.m., the hottest day of the year yet.

"Thank you," said Frank Firetti, 54, as he walked out of his Manassas office into a blast of humidity in early June. "Thank you," he said again. "What a perfect day to sell a pool."

He opened the trunk of his 2004 Toyota compact and changed into his selling outfit of slacks, a yellow polo and a silver wristwatch. He rubbed lotion on his face and sifted through six pairs of shoes before grabbing his dockside

loafers. His goal was to arrive at a customer's house looking "out of the catalogue," he said — no traces of mud on his feet, no worry lines carved into his forehead, no indication whatsoever that sales at Blue Haven Pools had been plummeting for five years running and that a staff of 24 full-timers had dwindled to six.

His job was to stand with customers in their back yards, suntanned and smiling, and look beyond the problems of the past several years to see the opportunities in every suburban cul-de-sac. How about a pool and a sauna next to the patio? Or a custom waterfall near the property line?

"The possibilities here are as big as you can dream them," he liked to tell customers, gesturing at their yards.

In a country built on optimism, Frank Firetti was the most optimistic character of all: the American salesman — if not the architect of the American dream then at least its most time-honored promoter. He believed that you could envision something and then own it, that what you had now was never as good as what you would have next. Since the country was founded, it had climbed ever upward on the spirit of people like him, on their vision, on their willpower, on their capitalism. But now, when he traveled from house to house to sell his monuments to American success, he sensed that spirit waning .

Most people believed the country was headed in the wrong direction. Fewer trusted banks, employers or government. Two presidential campaigns were bombarding his swing state of Virginia with messages about a beleaguered middle class and an endangered American dream.

He had been taught that success in the United States was as simple as choosing it, and that one man's hard work and ambition mattered more than elections in Washington or whims on Wall Street. His grandfather had taken a boat from Italy to Ellis Island and become a brick mason who helped build a state capitol. His father had started five businesses, each bigger than the last, until the profits paid for 10 acres in Virginia and a stable for a racehorse. He had nieces who graduated from college, a brother who lived in a mansion and a Filipina wife who was in the process of becoming a U.S. citizen.

The promise of America was embedded in the Firetti family story.

But lately Frank had begun to see fissures in that story, signs of the anxiety and doubt that had reconfigured so much of the country. The economic morass of the past five years had downsized his business, diminished his retirement savings and devalued his house. Now the effects were threatening to become psychological, nibbling closer and closer at the corners of his self-worth and his optimism.

As the summer of 2012 began, he and his family had much more at stake than swimming-pool sales or even the survival of their business. In question now was the conviction at the heart of an American family — that the future was theirs to control.

His brother had begun saying the world felt like a "tinderbox, ready to explode." His father, the co-owner of their Blue Haven Pools franchise, was speaking of this election in the most critical terms, telling Frank that "the country as we know it is as good as gone without a change." His 19-year-old son had begun building up his savings account, living in Frank's basement and studying economics at the nearby community college, in part because he hoped there would still be a business for him to inherit.

Frank, meanwhile, continued to believe the answer to his future was always waiting on the next sales call, inside the door of the next house. Always the next house.

"Just got to close this one," he said now, driving his car toward the first sales call of the day, a noon appointment in Arlington County. "Close one and we'll be doing okay."

He loved being in the car, the one place that was his alone, where he could fortify himself against stress and negativity. There was Motrin in the center console for his headaches, hand sanitizer for germs and four empty bags of pistachios, because cracking shells occupied his hands and quieted his mind. There was classic rock on the radio, because he had changed the station when the host of his favorite conservative talk show started dissecting the economy, a word Frank couldn't stand to say or hear, because he had come to equate it with "an excuse for

failure," he said. There was a Bible open on the back seat, because having it there occasionally helped seal the deal with a religious customer, but mostly because Frank was an ardent believer who liked to read and annotate the book when his faith needed restoration.

He pulled up to a mini-mansion and parked in the shade, leaving the air conditioning running while he reviewed the customer's file. Four or five years ago, sales appointments had been his favorite part of the job. He was a former construction worker who knew how to build the pools he sold. There were other salesmen who rushed through their pitches and then pulled out a contract, but Frank liked to savor those first few hours in a customer's house, when everything seemed possible and he could sit with a sketch pad and interpret someone's vision.

His designs occasionally went over budget, but few customers seemed to mind. They could rely on equity in their homes and banks that were eager to loan.

"Selling is winning," he liked to say.

But now the wins came much less frequently, and customers wanted to talk more about warranties and payment plans. Many of them owed more on their mortgages than their homes were worth, and most banks considered it too risky to lend tens of thousands of dollars for a swimming pool.

Frank had tried to compensate by lowering his prices and improving the quality of his work, raising Blue Haven's rating with the Better Business Bureau from an F under previous ownership to an A-minus. He had taped a copy of a Native American poem about fearlessness to the first page of his appointment book. He had also taken to repeating an aphorism, a company goal that sounded more like a prayer when he said it now, as he stepped out of his car onto the sidewalk.

"This will be a good business if we can sell a hundred pools this year," he said.

"A hundred pools," he said again. Then he walked up the driveway and knocked on the door.

Frank's wife attributed his successes to talent, and his brother jokingly credited luck, but the truth was that Frank possessed the single quality most central to American achievement. "You've got to have that drive," he said, and he always had. That's how a mediocre high school student turned himself into a restaurant manager, and how a restaurant manager became a chief building engineer, and how a building engineer became a salesman for a Virginia moving company making \$80,000 on straight commission.

He recognized opportunities and then seized them, never dwelling for too long on fears or self-doubts. He moved from one career to the next on a steady journey upward, pausing just long enough to hang a sign in the office that read, "God Bless America."

So, when his father asked if he wanted to tag along to a convention for swimming-pool salesmen in February of 2006 just to learn what the business was like, Frank answered the way he always had when a new opportunity arose.

"You bet," he said.

That's how he ended up at the Sheraton in Dallas with hundreds of other salesmen from 80 Blue Haven franchises across the country. His father, Sal Firetti, had recently joined Blue Haven as a salesman, and they spent three days spoiling themselves on the corporate expense account. It had been a record year for pool sales; there was all-you-could-eat prime rib at lunch and a specialized phone booth called a "money machine," set up in the lobby, where fans blew \$20 bills and employees got 15 seconds each to step inside and stuff their shirts. Frank met two salesmen from the Manassas office, Dennis and Ted, who wore Hawaiian shirts and told stories about making \$200,000 a year and traveling to the Bahamas on a company-paid cruise for salesmen who sold 42 pools or more.

"Greed on display," Frank called it, and he wanted in. He joined Blue Haven as a salesman within a year. He and his father bought the franchise in Manassas shortly thereafter. Sal was nearing 70, and he wanted to buy one more

business as a legacy for the grandkids. Frank was nearing 50, and he wanted to transition from working for companies to helping run one. It was the next step up in what seemed to him like the classic American narrative. The Firetti men agreed to manage the business together, bonded by a philosophy.

"Go big or go home," Frank said.

Now, on a Tuesday morning in late June, Frank walked into the company that had become his own. Ted and his Hawaiian shirts were gone, retired to Florida. Dennis was selling for a competitor. His father was back in the hospital because of complications from an illness that left him chronically fatigued, so now Frank was mostly in charge of Blue Haven by himself. He didn't have a lot of money in the bank. After six years selling pools, he had yet to qualify for the company's annual cruise. "One guy selling 40 pools?" he said, shaking his head. "These days, they could fit that group into a canoe."

"Good morning," he said now, stepping into the office. "Anybody up here?"

His voice broke the silence and echoed off the walls. The office, once cramped with 24 employees, now felt like a mausoleum on a dead-end road in an industrial park. There were empty desks and scattered customer thank-you notes from the boom years. There was still his stepmother, a former teacher who had taught herself to keep the books. There was his earnest 16-year-old nephew, helping out for the summer in mesh shorts and untied sneakers. There was his son, Tyler, down in the basement warehouse bumping his head to rap music on an iPod and taking inventory of what supplies they had left.

Frank walked into his corner office and closed the door. He had been increasing his hours even as business slowed, believing he could work his way out by punching numbers into his oversize calculator and compiling photo albums to showcase the pools he built. The phone affixed to his hip rang every few minutes, although too few of the calls came from customers.

His father called on his way home from the hospital: Try lowering the prices again, he said.

His brother called: Hire some staff, he said. Take some risks. You're sitting on a gold mine. "A damn gold mine!"

Now there was a knock on his office door. "Yep," Frank said, and in walked Scott, his construction manager and most loyal employee. Scott was a talented builder who had worked for other pool companies, but he had stuck with Blue Haven through the downturn because he believed in the company's work. Even as its annual business dipped from 400 pools to a hundred, Frank had never asked Scott to build with cheaper materials or shortchange customer warranties.

"We've got a bit of a problem," Scott said. A storm had caused damage to one of their pools still under warranty, and it would require a few hundred dollars to fix.

"Does anything ever go right?" Frank asked. He looked up from his desk and smiled.

"Not lately," Scott said.

They stood together for a moment in the quiet office. When his family bought Blue Haven, Frank had vowed to take care of his employees. He wanted to start a profit-sharing plan and celebrate good years by taking the entire staff to the Bahamas. But now Scott hadn't taken a decent vacation in two years, and he had started cleaning pools to make ends meet. He had briefly considered leaving the business to work for the government.

"You ever think about doing something else?" Scott asked.

"Sure," Frank said. "Yesterday, day before, day before that. But deep down I still believe it will get good."

"A hundred pools?" Scott said. He had heard the refrain.

"Maybe 75, even 80," Frank said. "If we can do that, we'll all be doing real good."

At first, swimming pools were just another product that he sold: \$40,000-to-\$200,000 retail price; several thousand pounds of concrete followed by 30,000 gallons of water; a two-month construction headache for 6 percent commission.

But the more he learned about pools, the more he found them representative of something larger. They were carvings etched into back yards as a mark of ascent, commemorating a customer's arrival in the upper middle class. They were a signal: You had a pool, you were an American somebody. Frank loved to visit his construction sites, exchange his few words of Spanish with the crew and then patrol the area with a digital camera. The crews sometimes found it peculiar, but Frank didn't care. He wrote into each contract that he was allowed to take pictures and chronicle his creation. A black hole in the earth became a smooth bowl of white-and-blue speckled plaster, filled with water so calm and pristine that it offered a promise. Here was a place of undisturbed relaxation, of aqua blue and sandstone, a monument to luxury that could be owned. He hung photos of his favorite pools in the office and brought others home to show his wife. He wanted one.

His sister already owned a pool, a custom model with two waterfalls and a hot tub that Frank had sold to her at a discounted cost.

His brother had purchased a few pools in his life before deciding it would be better to buy a house on the water.

His father had a pool on three acres in Purcellville, where he hosted family parties and cooked Italian meals on Sundays.

About a year after Frank started working for Blue Haven, he had decided to design a pool of his own. It would be his most ambitious creation yet — the biggest pool he had ever drawn, a concept he was sure nobody had thought of before. He drew a 1,200-square-foot pool with an island dotting the center and a lazy river wrapped around the perimeter.

"I'm going to lie on my back and float in circles all day." That was his plan.

Four years later, on a breezy evening in July, Frank came home to a townhouse in Purcellville sandwiched between two identical townhouses. It had been a promising day at work — one pool sold, another just waiting on county approval — and he cracked open a beer and grabbed a copy of his old drawing from the basement. His pool was still only a plan, stored alongside the yellowed schematics for a house he had hoped to build in Purcellville. He already owned the land, but their townhouse had declined in value and their money was tied up in Blue Haven. "Someday," he said.

He grabbed another beer and carried it out to the deck.

His son, Tyler, was already there, just back from his daily workout at the gym, and Frank sat across from him. His wife, Suzette, was inside packing for a trip to visit her family in the Philippines, and his 7-year-old daughter was dancing to music videos in the living room. It was just the two of them outside, father and son, drinking beer in a light breeze as the sun dipped toward the horizon. "Is there a better night than this?" Frank said, feeling wistful.

He began to talk about the things he wanted, his hallmarks of success in America: a Harley, a new camper, a family trip to Italy and that pool with the lazy river.

Tyler responded in turn by listing his own goals, which so many people in his father's generation had considered guarantees. "Stocks. Bonds. A house. A car," he said. He had been working double shifts as a waiter to boost his savings. He wanted to pay down his community college loans before transferring to a four-year college to finish his degree.

"Those are all good things," Frank said. "Smart. Real practical."

"You can't be too safe or too smart about money with the economy now," Tyler said. "I want to save up and make the smart investments."

"You'll make them," Frank said, nodding.

"I want to have that absolute stability," Tyler said.

"You'll have it."

They stayed out on the deck until the sun disappeared behind the townhouses. Frank went to bed just before midnight and awoke at 4. He always had been a sound sleeper, but lately he had been putting himself to bed with Tylenol PM and stirring awake to questions in the middle of the night. When had stability become the goal in America? What kind of dream was that? And in the economy of 2012, was it even attainable?

He had begun a habit of leaving his bedroom in the middle of the night without waking his wife. He would grab a blanket and walk out to a chair on the deck. It had become his favorite place to sleep. There was peace in the silence and perspective in the stars. There was comfort in the familiar churning sound of a swimming pool. It was a public one, located just across the street.

A few days later, Frank's father, Sal, came into work for the first time in weeks, taking the stairs up to the office two at a time, chest hair rising over his yellow Hawaiian shirt.

"Let's sell some pools," he said, clapping his hands.

He had gone to the hospital again the day before, and he had been too fatigued to leave home the day before that. But now here he was at 73, barking orders into his cellphone, hair slicked, feeling suddenly better.

"How we doing, Frank?" Sal said. "You good?"

It was a family habit not to allow for the possibility of any other answer.

"You bet," Frank said. "Real good."

Nothing reinforced his sense of possibility so much as seeing his father on a good day, shouting in Italian and marching around the office with the self-assurance of a man who had spent most of his life as a boss. Sal had started an alarm company, owned a hardware and appliance store and traveled regularly to Asia for an import business. His family loved to tell one story about his days as a salesman for Motorola, when he talked his way into an appointment with Redskins coach George Allen and then walked out 20 minutes later with a signed contract and a complimentary pair of season tickets. To his family, he had always been the best salesman of all.

Now his gravelly baritone filled the office as he called subcontractors and offered advice to Frank. They wrote down names of customers on a dry-erase board, and Frank booked sales appointments in his day planner. He had four customers on the verge of buying pools and 15 more who had expressed interest on the company's voice mail. Maybe his brother was right: Maybe they really could do millions. Maybe he could still hit a hundred. Now was the time to invest, to swing big, to hire a few more salespeople and call back some of those hesitant buyers for one more try. He picked up the phone and started dialing.

"Happy wife, happy life," he told one customer.

"Aren't you tired of baking in this heat?" he asked another.

Sal ordered pizza for lunch, and Frank joined him in the conference room. Sal loaded hot pepper flakes onto a slice and starting telling a story about a trip to Italy a decade earlier. He had been wandering around Ischia, an island off the coast of Naples, looking into their family ancestry when his guide led him to an apartment with a marble staircase worn from centuries of use. At the top of those stairs was a small apartment, and in that apartment was a

friendly old woman who turned out to be a distant relative, and on her wall was a black-and-white picture of Sal's grandfather.

"Marble stairs worn in the middle," Sal said, shaking his head.

"And still standing," Frank said.

"Makes you feel like a part of something," Sal said.

"Something that lasts," Frank said.

They ate in silence for a minute, thinking about the decades of drive and ambition that had delivered their family to this office in Manassas. From Italy to the United States in 1911; from Firetto to Firetti during the chaos of processing at Ellis Island; from handcrafted marble steps to American brick masonry; from an apartment on a volcanic island to 10 acres in the rolling horse country of Virginia. The Firetti family narrative was the story of steady advance, of one generation after the next overcoming distance and circumstance to accomplish something greater.

Now it was left to Frank to outdo the past again, and something about that thought made the office feel small and quiet. He stood up from the table and rubbed his forehead. "Back to work," he said.

Sal returned to his office, sank into his chair and closed his eyes. "I'm exhausted," he said. And then, almost whispering: "Damn sickness." He stood up from his desk and walked over to see Frank.

"I'm going home," he said.

"What happened?" Frank said. "I thought you were doing good."

"*La vecchiaia e una carogna*," Sal said, repeating an Italian phrase that meant getting old involved nothing but pain.

"You know I hate it when you say that," Frank said.

"Ah, come on. I'm going to hell in a handbasket."

Frank winced. "Okay," he said. "Go get a little rest."

He watched his father ease down the steps, leaving him alone in the office. His glasses sat low on his nose and his shoulders slumped toward his desk. The phones had stopped ringing. The leads on the company voice mail sounded mostly like dead ends. There was a letter taped on the wall from Blue Haven's corporate office, sent a few months earlier. "Most offices have had to let go employees," it read. "Those sales reps still with Blue Haven represent the *crème de la crème*. Being in this elite group is an accomplishment in itself!"

He stood up from his desk and walked into the company's storage room, the place he went whenever his optimism began to feel misguided. There were cardboard boxes piled high on the shelves, each one filled with Blue Haven contracts from 2005, 2006 and 2007, great years for the American economy. Frank sat on a knee-high stool in the center of the room and reached for the closest box. The label read: "Last Name M, 2006," and inside were 42 swimming-pool contracts sold to a single letter in a single year.

He pulled out contracts and started to read the sale prices: "Sixty-two thousand," he said. "Eighty. Fifty-four. A hundred-and-twenty. Ninety-seven."

He reached for another box.

"Forty-two. Seventy-eight. Sixty-seven."

Quieter now.

"Fifty. Ninety-one. Can't you see? This place was mega."

He looked up and stared at the boxes stacked high on the walls, overcome by the evidence. What had come before was better than what he had now. Maybe, despite so much hard work and ambition, he couldn't do mega. Maybe, in the summer of 2012, all he could do was this:

"Fifty pools," he said, standing up from the stool. "Fifty pools and we'll be doing all right."

One night late in the summer, Frank carried a plate of leftovers and his laptop to the kitchen table so he could video-chat with Suzette, shortly after she arrived in the Philippines. She had traveled back to her home town of Dumaguete City six times in the decade since they married, but he had never gone. The flight cost \$1,700, and a worthwhile trip across the world required more vacation time than Frank had taken in years.

Suzette appeared on his screen, and Frank saw the only view of the Philippines he had come to know: a whitewashed stucco wall, a kitchen chair and his wife holding coffee in her hand. It was 8 a.m. for her. The picture blurred and the volume faded out.

"What are you doing today?" Frank asked.

"What?" Suzette said, leaning closer to her computer.

"What are you doing today?" he yelled.

"Oh, we are still getting ready for the party."

It was the one-year anniversary of Suzette's mother's death, and she and her sisters had planned an event for 300. As usual, they had paid for all of it.

"Free dinner on the Firettis?" Frank said.

"What?" Suzette said.

She pointed to her ear, indicating a problem with the volume, but Frank wondered if she was choosing not to hear. She had spent almost \$25,000 in the past three years to support relatives in the Philippines, and her frequent trips to Western Union had become a point of contention in an otherwise happy marriage.

The "Land of Money" — that was what Suzette's relatives sometimes called the United States. Her older sister had immigrated first on a temporary visa to do housework for a diplomat and then recommended Suzette for a similar job in 1988. She boarded a plane for the first time, traveled 38 hours and reunited with her sister at the airport. They stopped at Pizza Hut and drove to clean a house in the Washington suburbs. Five hours later, she had \$80 in cash — the equivalent of a good month's wage in Dumaguete City.

Suzette had been working steadily ever since, caring for an autistic child and tidying houses in order to send \$250 a month back to her family. News of her generosity had traveled quickly, and now, whenever Suzette came to the Philippines, she found dozens of people waiting outside her family's house hoping for a little help from the Land of Money. They saw the United States the same way she once had, as a place of endless opportunity, where even the cleaning ladies got rich. Now she knew better, but they didn't.

Frank looked at his wife on the computer screen and noticed her fingernails, each painted a different color. He had fallen for her at a barbecue a decade earlier, asking for her number and then calling the next day, but it had taken her a month to call back. She had confidence built during her years as a onetime beauty queen and member of an elite dance troupe. He had papers from a recent divorce and a temporary room in his father's house.

A few months into the relationship, Sal approached Suzette and asked what she thought about his son. "He has a kind heart," she told him. "He is a great father and a gentle man. It's not just the person he is now but the person he is becoming."

A decade later, he was still becoming. Frank sometimes wondered what Suzette's family thought when they wandered into view during these Skype conversations, stopping to wave and look into his living room. Did they wonder why he didn't visit them? Why Suzette couldn't give away more?

Did they consider him a disappointment in the Land of Money?

It was a possibility too hard to discuss, especially now, on a computer connection across the world.

"I love you," Suzette said.

"I love you, too," Frank said.

The screen went dark, and he walked into the kitchen. He rifled through the fridge, finding only a leftover bratwurst. He opened the freezer and frowned. "Nothing good," he said. Suzette would be away for two more weeks. His father was back in the hospital. It was just him, alone with the responsibilities of his townhouse and his business.

He took out his appointment book and checked his schedule for the next day. "Pretty light," he said. He stared at the page and then began flipping ahead to the next week and the next month, looking for a sign of possibility before summer's end.

And then, out of nowhere, one came.

A couple stumbled onto Blue Haven's Web site, liked what they saw and invited Frank to their house. He dressed in his slacks and yellow polo and silver watch and drove to Oakton, where he parked in the shade and idled in the car. He read over the first lines of the Native American poem in his appointment book. He checked his hair in the rearview mirror and smiled at his reflection. "Selling is winning," he said.

A man greeted Frank in the driveway, wearing a white-collared shirt and cuff links, and led him into the living room.

"Beautiful house," Frank said, taking a seat across from the man and his wife. He pointed out the window to the back yard, shaded by 100-year-old trees. "And a beautiful place for a pool," he said.

"We've been thinking about a pool since 2007," the husband said. "We're tired of waiting for a perfect comeback that might never happen. We want to enjoy our money."

"We want that negative edge, that waterfall," the wife said.

"A one-of-a-kind pool," the husband said.

Frank reached into his pocket and grabbed a pencil. "An infinity edge, huh?" he said, beginning to sketch.

"With mood lighting," the wife said.

"Somewhere in the range of a hundred-and-twenty grand," the husband said.

Frank started to draw faster, sharpening the borders of the pool, grinning, nodding, bouncing his knee. "Okay," he said. "Okay! A one-of-a-kind pool."

They watched him sketch, and Frank let his imagination run. "An infinity edge," he said again, mostly for himself. Here were people with a dream that they trusted him to shape. Here was money and ambition. Here was a house in

one of the richest neighborhoods in the country — a place built on American success. He shaded in the interior of the pool and handed the sketch to the wife.

“Beautiful,” she said. And then, a few minutes later: “I like you, Frank.”

“I trust you, Frank,” the husband said. “We’ll be in touch soon.”

“I can’t wait to hear,” Frank said, beaming, sensing in his gut what would soon become contractual — the couple would buy a pool for \$155,000, one of his biggest sales of the summer.

He walked out of the house to his car and turned up the classic rock on his radio. “Momentum,” he said, drumming against the steering wheel. One big sale would surely lead to others. He called his father to share the news. “Could be a good August,” he said. Selling was winning. The future was still his to control. He drove back to the office, pushing the speed limit, ready for the opportunities ahead.

And then he waited. And waited. The phones stayed quiet. His son and his nephew went back to school. His stepmother cut back on her hours. A subcontractor left early to spend the winter in Texas. August remained as slow as July, and as slow as June and May before that.

Frank sat alone in the office on Industrial Road at the end of the month and looked out the window. Out there, unemployment was near 8 percent, the presidential election was still a tossup and America remained unsettled. Another of his competitors was about to go under, and Frank wondered who might be next. The economy had turned business into a game of survival and sales into an exercise in humility. It had to get better. He was sure of it. But what if it didn’t? If a salesman lost his optimism, what did that mean for everyone else?

He rubbed his hand over his eyes and picked up his calculator. Their landlord had agreed to halve the rent so long as they took care of the property, and now an afternoon shadow crept across overgrown grass, and weeds broke through the parking lot. Summer was ending, and soon it would be their slow season — a time to reckon with results.

They wouldn’t be selling 100 pools.

Not 75.

Not 50.

“Just have to hold our breath and make it to spring,” Frank said, still looking out the window, sounding resigned.

He heard a car pull into the parking lot and watched a man and a dog make their way to the front door. It was Blue Haven’s former sales manager — a man who had trained Frank to sell pools and then left to start his own swimming-pool company when the business slowed. He climbed to the top of the stairs, and Frank greeted him at the landing and shook his hand.

“Quiet up here,” the former sales manager said. “How’s business?”

“Good, thanks,” Frank said. He stood firm at the top of the stairs, holding the sales manager near the entrance to block his view of the rest of the office. Behind him, the dry-erase board of current projects was mostly empty. The only noise was the faint voice of Sean Hannity on the radio, dissecting the latest lackluster jobs report and what it meant for the presidential election.

The sales manager looked past Frank to the empty desks and the old thank-you notes on the wall.

“In the last seven weeks, I’ve done a million in business,” the sales manager said, patting his dog on the head while he spoke. “It’s not where it was, probably won’t be in my lifetime. But it’s something.”

"Yep. It's coming around," Frank said. He took another step forward, moving the sales manager a few feet closer to the door.

"You're looking more and more like your dad every day," the sales manager said.

Frank smiled. "Good to see you."

The sales manager nodded and walked down the steps. When he reached the bottom, he stopped and turned around.

"Hey, Frank."

"Yeah."

"I'm looking to expand, you know. So, if things are hard, and if you ever get tired of being committed to this, just give me a call. We can figure out a deal."

Frank looked back at him for a long minute, mulling over the irony. The past five years had turned everything upside down, and now there was a salesman standing at his front door, feeding him lines, sensing an opportunity and offering a deal.

"You're treating me like a customer," Frank said.

He stepped closer to the stairs before he said what came next. Because even during this time of doubt and disappointment, there remained one conviction to which he was still clinging — a belief at the core of his optimism that he needed to make clear.

"*I'm* the salesman," he said.

20121015-03	10:24	MarthaH	Fw: A Clean Joke!
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Two brooms were hanging in the closet, and, after a while, they got to know each other so well they decided to get married.

One broom was, of course, the bride broom, the other the groom broom.

The bride broom looked very beautiful in her white dress. The groom broom was handsome and suave in his tuxedo. The wedding was lovely.

After the wedding, at the wedding dinner, the bride broom leaned over and said to the groom broom, "I think I am going to have a little whisk broom!"

'Impossible!' said the groom broom.

(Are you ready for this? Brace yourself; this is going to hurt!)

"We haven't even swept together!"

(Sounds to me like she's been sweeping around!)

No surprises, except how much I enjoyed eating it. Everything very fresh; to my half romaine, half spring mix, we added egg, chick peas, cheddar, carrots, cucumbers, and (of course) beets; no chicken or goat cheese today. All the seeds and nuts, so add a shake or two of walnuts, pecans, sunflower and sesame seeds, dried cranberries, black pepper... and less than a quarter of a dipper of fine house-made vinaigrette.

I managed to abstain from dessert, although I studied them carefully.

So here was lunch today; I went the gourmet route and added a bottle of Topo Chico:



Small Salad Day

from Daily Kos:

Last Thursday, Stephen Colbert asked a brilliant question which lays waste to Mitt Romney's entire tax plan.

Click below to watch a video of Colbert asking the question, then share it widely over Facebook, Twitter or other social networks. It's not just good for a laugh—it exposes why Mitt Romney's economic policy is such a fraud.

Keep fighting, —Rachel Colyer, Associate Campaign Director, Daily Kos

Video: "Stephen Colbert Destroys Romney's Tax Plan with One Simple Question" by BruinKid, Daily Kos

Oct. 15, 2012, (<http://www.dailykos.com/story/2012/10/15/1144665/-Stephen-Colbert-destroys-Romney-s-tax-plan-with-one-simple-question?detail=email>)

Last Thursday, Stephen Colbert had a brilliant segment of Formidable Opponent, where he debated himself about Mitt Romney's positions. And in it, there was one key question he asked which laid waste to Romney's entire tax proposal.

[20121015-07](#) 19:57 Marci Fw: Doors

[Source of original email unknown. –SteveB]

Ever walk into a room with some purpose in mind, only to completely forget what that purpose was?

Turns out, doors themselves are to blame for these strange memory lapses.

Psychologists at the University of Notre Dame have discovered that passing through a doorway triggers what's known as an event boundary in the mind, separating one set of thoughts and memories from the next.

Your brain files away the thoughts you had in the previous room and prepares a blank slate for the new locale."

It's not aging, it's the damn door!

[I wonder if this also happens with, like, cats, dogs, mice, and horses? –SteveB]

[20121015-09](#) 23:58 Marci Photos: Special Moments #2





<http://www.lovethepics.com/2012/07/69-exquisite-infinity-pools-that-will-blow-your-mind/>



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

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## FRIENDS OF THE MIDDLE NEWSLETTER #249 — OCT. 17, 2012

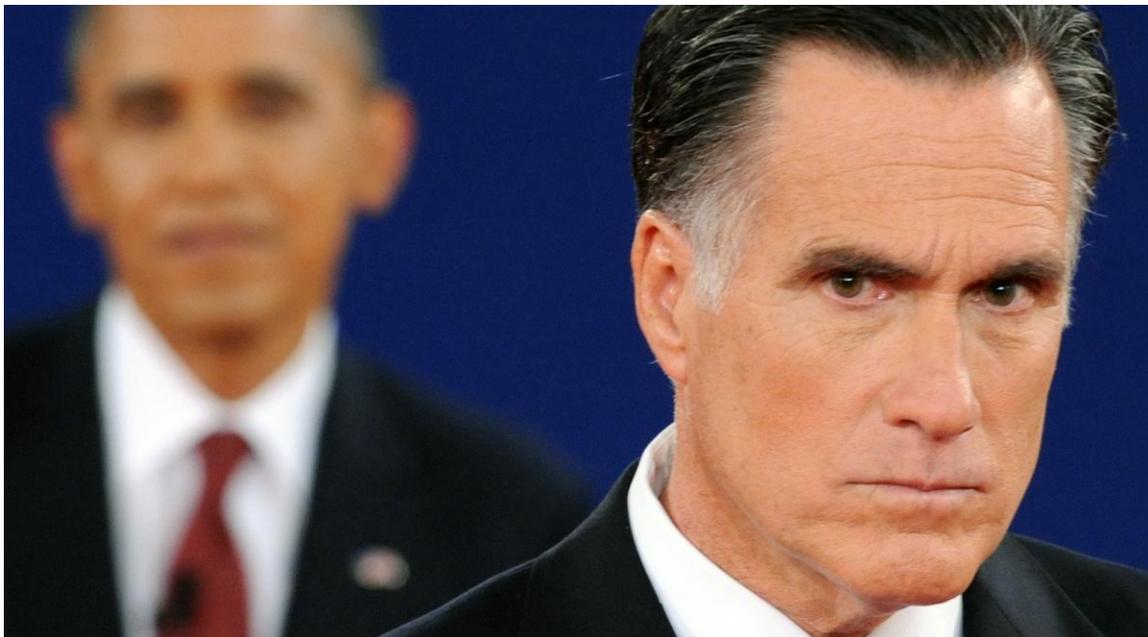
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**[INDEX: Click here.](#)**

### **Barack!**

(posted by Steven W. Baker / SteveB, Oct. 17, 2012)

Here are five views of last night's O'Victory...



"Presidential Debate: Obama Snaps Back Hard" by Roger Simon, Politico

Oct. 17, 2012, (<http://www.politico.com/news/stories/1012/82509.html>)

(HEMPSTEAD, NY) As well as Barack Obama did in his second presidential debate — and he did very well, indeed -- you still have to ask yourself one question: Why didn't he do it in his first debate?

If, 12 days ago at the University of Denver, Obama had delivered the same high-energy, on-target, putdown of Mitt Romney as he did at Hofstra University Tuesday night, think of where he would be today.

He would not be trailing in the polls. He would not have the media circling over his head like vultures eyeing their next meal. He would not be trying to climb out of a hole, but would be moving forward instead.

Perhaps it was mere fatigue that night in Denver. Or overconfidence. Or lack of preparation. Or the altitude. Perhaps we will never know. Perhaps he will never know.

No matter. What matters is that in the second of three presidential debates, Obama was the performer his supporters were hoping for: the Obama of four years ago, a person hungry for the job and not ground down by it.

And Romney helped him out Tuesday night. If one believes the polls, Romney's big gains have come from his improving image with women. But at Hofstra, Romney tried to steamroller the moderator, CNN's Candy Crowley, just as he had steamrolled PBS' Jim Lehrer in Denver.

The pitfall for Romney was not that Crowley didn't let him get away with it, the pitfall was that he looked like a bully trying to put a woman in her place.

And, when Romney was trying to demonstrate the opposite, by saying he had hired many women as governor of Massachusetts, he said of his gubernatorial staff, "They brought me a binder full of women."

Women come in binders?

And Obama was better - - quicker, sharper, more fast-footed and sure-footed - - than he was the first time around.

Romney tried to make the point that Obama's retirement funds were probably invested offshore just like his own.

"Have you looked at your pension?" Romney said, then used the same hectoring repetition he had used in some of his primary debates. "Have you?"

"No," Obama said with a grin, "it's not as big as yours."

Even the reporters, who really do try not to express outward emotion during these debates, erupted into a roar of laughter in the press filing center.

Obama hit his talking points, demonstrating that rehearsal - - as silly as it is for two informed candidates to have to rehearse - - does pay off. He summed up his campaign in one answer to a member of the town hall audience.

"Osama bin Laden is dead," the president said. "Insurance companies can't jerk you around. We saved an auto industry on the brink of collapse."

And, in the most somber and bitter exchange of the debate, over whether U.S. diplomats had been provided with proper protection in Libya, at first Romney appeared to do well. He implied that today Obama cries crocodile tears over our slain diplomats but that after the Benghazi attack he flew to Las Vegas for a fundraiser.

Obama snapped back that right after the attack he denounced the attacks as terror.

Romney pounced, saying this was not true and that in reality it had taken Obama several days to denounce the attack as an act of terror.

Obama objected and Crowley ruled in his favor, saying that, in fact, Obama had used the word "terror" in the Rose Garden.

Obama's actual words were: "No acts of terror will ever shake the resolve of this great nation."

And it gave Obama a further chance to make up ground with women. Hillary Clinton, his secretary of state, has been saying she was responsible for any flaws in protection in Libya.

Tuesday night, Obama lifted any blame from her shoulders.

"I am ultimately responsible for what took place there," he said. "I have to greet those coffins."

It sounded conscientious. Gutsy. Presidential. Everything that Obama wasn't in his first debate, in fact.

Was this really the same person? Just 12 days later?

Apparently so. Though Donald Trump might insist on a DNA test to prove it.

"Obama Outsources Romney" by John Nichols, *The Nation*

October 16, 2012, (<http://www.thenation.com/blog/170621/obama-outsources-romney#>)

Mitt Romney's first name is Willard, which means that he is actually "W. Mitt Romney."

And it was a "W" that did him in Tuesday night.

In the middle of the second presidential debate, the one where Barack Obama had to do better and did, moderator Candy Crowley invited a question from Susan Katz, an undecided voter.

Katz admitted that she was "disappointed with the lack of progress I've seen in the last four years." That sounded good for Romney, but then Katz added the "however..."

However, I do attribute much of America's economic and international problems to the failings and missteps of the Bush administration. Since both you and President Bush are Republicans, I fear a return to the policies of those years should you win this election. What is the biggest difference between you and George W. Bush, and how do you differentiate yourself from George W. Bush?

There was never any question that Mitt Romney—who long ago abandoned the liberal Republican values of his parents—would throw the most recent Republican president under the bus.

That's how Mitt rolls.

Unfortunately, he was so busy tossing Bush under the bus that he did not notice that it was dragging him down as well.

After being forced to answer the question by Crowley, Romney finally said that "President Bush and I are different people, and these are different times."

For instance, Romney said, "I'll crack down on China. President Bush didn't."

That was all Barack Obama needed.

"When [Governor Romney] talks about getting tough on China, keep in mind that Governor Romney invested in companies that were pioneers of outsourcing to China and is currently investing in...companies that are building surveillance equipment for China to spy on its own folks," announced Obama. "Governor, you're the last person who's going to get tough on China."

In the parlance of the Romney campaign, that was a "zinger."

It stung because it had the ring of truth.

Again and again, on a night that saw Romney match the aggressiveness of his first debate performance, Obama stepped up. Instead of the listless performance that cost him so dearly in their initial encounter, this time the president was fighting.

Obama was not just fighting back, however. He was playing offense. On pay equity and immigration and tax policy, Obama called Romney out. And on the inevitable Libya question, he caught Romney out, explaining that he had from the beginning described the Benghazi attack as terrorism -- and getting a confirmation from Crowley that left the Republican candidate sputtering.

When Romney abandoned the truth, as he did on a question about energy production, Obama abandoned the deference that had served him so poorly in the first debate.

"It's just not true," the president said of his challenger's assertion.

Referencing his challenger's ever-changing positions on central issues of the campaign—such as tax cuts for the rich—Obama recalled the right-wing stances on economic and social issues that Romney so ardently embraced during the Republican primary campaign. "When Governor Romney stands here, after a year of campaigning, when during a Republican primary he stood on stage and said 'I'm going to give tax cuts'—he didn't say tax-rate cuts, he said 'tax cuts'—to everybody, including the top 1 percent, you should believe him because that's been his history," Obama said.

"And," he continued, "that's exactly the kind of top-down economics that is not going to work if we want a strong middle class and an economy that's striving for everybody."

Obama was not always the debater that some of his supporters would have preferred. He did not, for instance, mount the sort of muscular defenses of Social Security and Medicare that Democrats such as Ohio Senator Sherrod Brown and Wisconsin Senate candidate Tammy Baldwin have made centerpieces of their campaigns this fall. That was politically tone-deaf, and practically worrying for progressives who fear that this president might be inclined to compromise on issues where he needs to fight.

The medium-cool president—who will never be confused with a full-on economic populist—did not begin to rip Romney as aggressively as he could have on the matter of the Republican nominee's overseas investments and on Romney's continued ties to the outsourcing machine that is Bain Capital.

Would that Obama had mentioned the circumstance in Freeport, Illinois, where Bain is this fall shuttering the advanced-technology Sensata plant and shipping the jobs to a client state in China.

But when Obama was on, he was very on.

In that same answer to the "W." question, Obama nailed it.

"When I said that we had to make sure that China was not flooding our domestic market with cheap tires, Governor Romney said I was being protectionist, that it wouldn't be helpful to American workers," said the president. "Well, in fact we saved a thousand jobs, and that's the kind of tough trade actions that are required."

That was a direct hit.

But the president was not done swinging.

[The] last point I want to make is this: You know, there are some things where Governor Romney's different from George Bush. George Bush didn't propose turning Medicare into a voucher. George Bush embraced comprehensive immigration reform. He didn't call for self-deportation. George Bush never suggested that we eliminate funding for Planned Parenthood.

So there are differences between Governor Romney and George Bush, but they're not on economic policy. In some ways, he's gone to a more extreme place when it comes to social policy, and I think that's a mistake. That's not how we're going to move our economy forward.

It was theme that Obama would return to again and again on a night where the president was talking to voters in swing states such as Ohio, which have been so hard hit by outsourcing.

After Romney made his big job-creation pitch, Obama acknowledged that "it's estimated that that will create 800,000 new jobs."

Then, with a smile, he added, "Problem is, they'll be in China or India or Germany. That's not the way we're going to create jobs here."

Obama was not speaking to Romney, or to Candy Crowley on that one.

He was talking to Toledo.

That's politics.

Smart politics.

"Romney vs. Obama Was a Nauseating Draw, and Both Deserve to Lose" by John Tamny, *Forbes*

Oct. 17, 2012, (<http://www.forbes.com/sites/johntamny/2012/10/17/romney-v-obama-was-a-nauseating-draw-and-both-deserve-to-lose/>)

(HEMPSTEAD, NY) Back in 1968, Alabama Governor George Wallace thundered that "There's not a dime's worth of difference between the Republicans and Democrats." Wallace's famous quote sprung to mind last night as Mitt Romney and Barack Obama squared off in their second debate.

Surely there were differences between them, but to watch the debate was to see two candidates vying to say who would cut taxes the least for top earners, who would "crack down" most on China, and who believed the most in an "all of the above" energy strategy. Neither said much of import, if at all, each candidate won certain segments, but the impossible to escape conclusion was just how unimpressive both candidates were.

It was like two beginners playing tennis with each other, neither able to hit the ball over the net. Both deserve to lose.

It began with the first question asked by a Hofstra College student who wanted to know what either would do to ensure that future grads like him will have jobs.

Romney responded that (all quotes paraphrased) "We'll have to make a college education more affordable for all, and I'll do this through growth of the Pell Grant program." The problem, of course, is that it's the federal government's existing subsidization of college loans through programs like the Pell Grant that reduce the incentives for colleges and universities to lower tuition costs. And then in promoting a boost in Pell Grant funding, Romney's calling for more of the same whereby the feds take money from one set of American hands, and place those funds in the hands of others. On the street this would be called theft, but when politicians propose it, it's "compassion."

After that, Romney basically repeated the same line over and over again: "I know what it takes to create jobs, and I'm going to make sure you get a job." The president as our nanny, one supposes. The sad thing is that Romney, far more than Obama, *does know* how to create jobs, but to explain how he does he'd have to be more up front that he's rich precisely because he's expert at turning around companies.

Obama's response was no better. He added his support for expanding the Pell Grant program that makes college more expensive, and then "bragged" that funding for Pell Grants had already increased during his deficit-ridden presidency.

On jobs specifically, the nanny standard bearer for the Democrats said "We need good jobs, jobs that can support a family." Having said this, he then said that he wanted to create manufacturing jobs which, even if he could, would in today's world at best foot the bill for a Starbucks latte – once a day. Barack Obama to families: Drop dead!

Moderator Candy Crowley followed up with a query about what either candidate would do about the high number of jobless Americans overall.

This segment went to Romney for the former governor pointing out that the unemployment rate is the same today as when Obama entered office. He added that the number is only 7.8% because so many have exited the labor force due to a lack of job opportunities.

Obama responded with his stock line about 5 million jobs created since he entered office, plus his wildly questionable assertion that he saved 1 million automobile jobs; jobs that would have disappeared under Romney for the latter having wanted to send GM and Chrysler into bankruptcy. Romney's response was fairly good for him pointing out that Obama too took the ailing carmakers into bankruptcy; Romney simply having wanted to do it the normal way (you know, without the fleecing of secured creditors, gifting the automakers to the UAW) whereby the company continues to operate while restructuring its debt.

In the next question Obama was asked about Energy Secretary Steven Chu having admitted three different times that he'd like to see gasoline prices higher.

Obama predictably talked up how much oil and natural gas exploration has increased during his administration, then pivoted to the green energy he likes so much, and then proclaimed that he would "not cede green energy jobs to China and Germany." Funny how much us taxpayers have had to pay so that Obama could pursue his green fantasy, and as for China and Germany, if taxpayers in both countries are so eager to fund the economic lie that is green energy, and if skeptics like this one turn out to be wrong, the good news is that we'll be able to import the energy at a market price as though it was conceived in Berkeley. Does anyone want to bet me on my assertion that green energy will never be able to stand on its own absent major subsidies? Can I pay you back ten lifetimes from now when you win the bet?

Romney then predictably responded that yes, oil and gas exploration is up under Obama, but none of it on federal lands. He also brought up a criminal action the Obama administration took against a producer in North Dakota. And then ever a me-too candidate, Romney said he too was for an "all of the above energy plan", which on its own is strange for someone who claims to believe in the free market; free markets surely devoid of national energy plans. Puzzling to this writer is why Romney didn't attack Obama again for not just the costs of his green energy fantasies, but also how much of the companies funded are now bankrupt. A lost opportunity for Romney.

Romney perhaps drew blood for pointing out that a gallon of gas in Nassau was \$1.84 when Obama entered office, and now it's \$4. Obama drew blood in return with his reminder that gasoline was relatively cheap when he entered office precisely because the U.S. economy was collapsing under Republican policies that Romney would supposedly like to revive. Of course neither made the obvious point that gasoline is only expensive insofar as the Obama dollar is very cheap; Obama failing to make that point for obvious reasons, Romney failing to make it because his economic advisers such as Greg Mankiw actually support the Treasury and Fed's so far successful, and economy wrecking efforts to debase the greenback.

On taxes, Romney was asked what tax deductions he would limit in order to cut taxes for all Americans across the board.

Notable here was that the questioner pointed out the good in the Romney tax plan (20% across the board cuts for all earners); this something Romney has so far been reluctant to do given his odd and frustrating desire to not appear to support a reduction in the price of work for the top 1% in this country whose economic achievements improve all of our lives on a daily basis. Instead, Romney went out of his way yet again to oddly brag that the top 5% would still account for 60% of federal revenues (and you thought Obama was a socialist), while all the benefits would come to middle earners whose tax savings by virtue of them being middle earners can't move the investment dial that leads to job creation. After that, Romney's implicit message to middle income types with designs on making it into the 1% is essentially "If you have the temerity to achieve so much that you enter the 1%, your penalty will be higher taxes." Romney's the growth candidate. No seriously, he is.

Obama was naturally no better. He, much like his taxation doppelganger in Romney promised middle class tax relief, though in his case he proposed doing the impossible whereby he would try to fleece top earners even more

than at present in order to close the deficit. Lots of luck with that. He then added that "Governor Romney thinks it's fair and that it grows the economy when people making \$20 million a year pay a lower tax rate than those making \$50,000. That does not grow the economy." Actually, Mr. President, it does grow the economy when you lower the tax burden on the vital few whose exploits elevate our economic existence, not to mention that any income not taxed away by the feds morphs into investment, investment authors all company formation, and through company formation there's job creation. Economic growth is easy, though you wouldn't know it from listening to either of the candidates.

Obama then asserted that Romney thinks economic growth can only occur if capital gains taxes on the rich are maintained at their present rate of 15%. Romney should have answered him in the affirmative, that capital gains taxes are a cost placed on investment, that if you want more jobs you need more investment, and that the job-maximizing capital gains rate is zero, but instead he repeated for seemingly the 6th time his platitudinous line about how "I know what it takes to create jobs, and my five point plan will get us there." Those listening to the debate on the radio probably thought they were listening to a 4th grade debate, as opposed to a faceoff between two men vying to lead the richest, most important nation on earth. Seriously, we used to be a serious country with serious leaders.

On male/female income disparities, Obama talked about enforcing laws, ending discrimination and more education, and then Romney talked about how he made a point when governor to get more women into his cabinet. There was a time when Republicans decried affirmative action.

Up next was a question from an undecided voter who, though disappointed in our progress the last four years, is similarly worried that Romney would bring us back to the Bush policies that she similarly didn't like. Good taste, this questioner.

Romney's response brought new meaning to the word hopeless. Once again he trotted out his "Five Point Plan", after which he talked up a rush to energy independence that would cripple us economically for violating comparative advantage, then he said "I'll crack down on China, Bush didn't." Actually Bush bashed the Chinese too, and the result was a severely debased dollar that drove oil to nosebleed heights, and a horrifying increase of investment into the sink of wealth that is housing (the middle classes have to hedge governmental destruction of the dollar too) which led to a recession, and then led to a financial crisis thanks to massive bipartisan support of bank bailouts. And then channeling Walter Mondale and Michael Dukakis, two presidential candidates who pandered to the little guy on the way to landslide presidential losses, Romney said "I'm for small business, Bush wasn't." Ok, the problem here is that though small businesses create lots of jobs, they tend to be able to thanks to their proximity to *large businesses*. Rest assured, absent big business, there would be very few small businesses.

In his response, Obama once again blamed the Bush administration for all of the economic problems during his own presidency, then he turned to Romney and said "Governor, you're the last person who's going to get tough on China." Second graders could doubtless relate to the two candidates as they tried to out-protectionist one another.

The next question went to Obama. The questioner had voted for Obama in 2008, didn't think things were so hot economically in 2012, so how would they be different if Obama were handed a second term.

Obama naturally blamed Bush yet again before talking about the 5 million jobs he created. Romney perhaps did a little better in response as he rattled off the economic statistics of what is Obama's failed economic presidency. Romney noted that during Reagan's recovery, and despite a much smaller population, two times as many jobs were created. He then had a good line about how Obama "is great at describing his vision, but his record doesn't match his rhetoric." Round to Romney, flyweight division.

And then Obama took the next round when a Hispanic woman asked about their immigration policies for productive, but illegal immigrants. Romney gave the usual GOP line about how he wants immigration, if it's legal. "But I won't grant amnesty to illegals", and then he talked about his support of a computer system that would crack down on companies that hire illegals. No joke, we used to be a free country, and Republicans used to be into freedom.

Obama seemed reasonable after Romney in the sense that he acknowledged the truth that we're a nation of immigrants, not to mention the happy truth that the world's talented still want to come to the U.S. Obama then

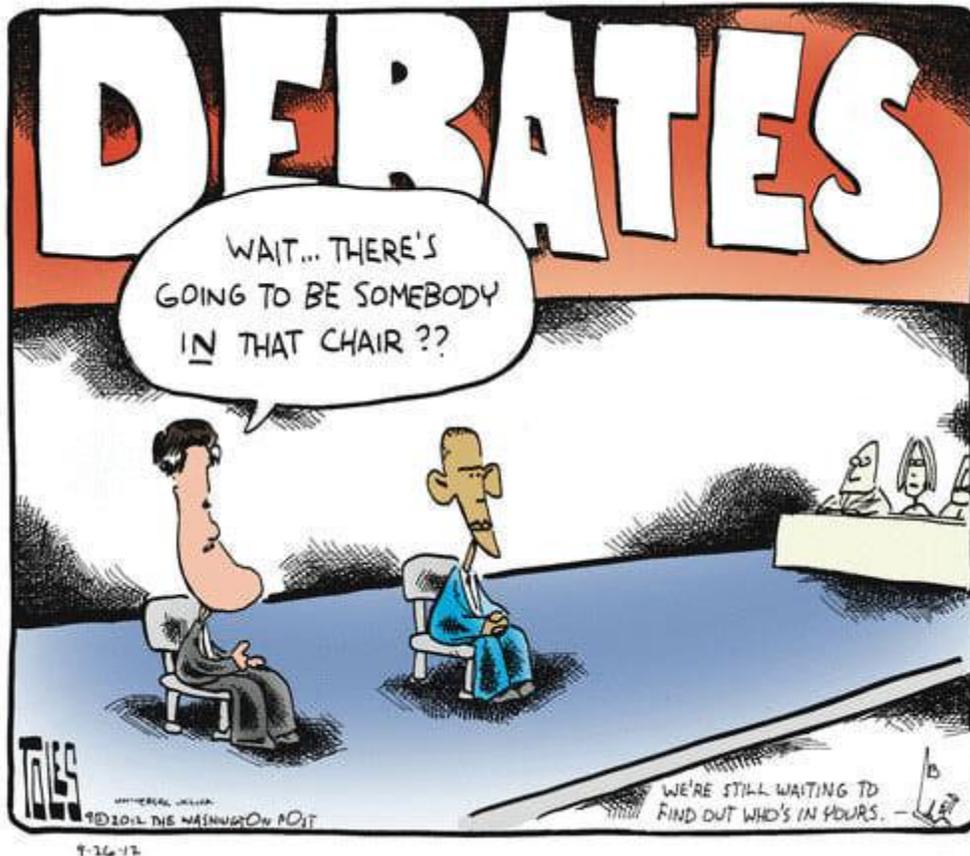
opened himself up to major smackdown from Romney when he noted that the illegal inflow of workers across the border is the lowest it's been in 40 years. Romney could have easily said that the "inflow has plummeted precisely because your economy is so bad", but to do so, he would have had to acknowledge just how foolish is his own immigration stance. Round to Obama, featherweight division.

And then they returned to jobs, and a questioner asked what both would do about outsourcing; outsourcing the economically stimulative process whereby low value work is sent overseas, the outflow of jobs boosts profits for U.S. companies, then those U.S. companies use their profits to expand while creating higher-paying jobs stateside. If we didn't send jobs overseas, we'd be a very poor country for so many Americans still stuck in low value work. In short, outsourcing is beautiful.

Not to these two amateurs. In Romney's case, as though he felt he hadn't stressed enough his plan to start an economy-wrecking, stock market crashing trade war with China, the former governor, as if on auto-pilot talked up again his promise to "crack down" on China in order to bring jobs back to the U.S.

And then Obama, never one to let a bad, economy crippling idea go unanswered, followed up with his own bad idea, contradicting himself in the process. Specifically, he drooled that "Some jobs won't come back to America because they're low wage and low skill, and that's why I want to bring back manufacturing jobs to the United States." Translated: "Low wage, low skilled jobs aren't coming back to America, so I want to bring low wage, low skilled jobs back to America."

Last night's debate has to be considered a draw, albeit one in which both fighters punched *themselves* out in the first round. It was truly an embarrassing night for each candidate, and as the world was watching, an embarrassing night for the United States more broadly. It's been said that "When a Democrat runs against a Democrat, a Democrat wins." I'll have neither.



20121016-01 08:24 Pam Re: My Political Muse... (reply to Art, FotM Newsletter #248)

It is so gratifying to hear you say this, Art. I've been worried about this issue for years, ever since I taught Western Civ. and learned just how many times throughout history the rich have stuck it to the poor, with disastrous results for everyone--except those in power, and even they get killed in the end. I do fear violence and perhaps outright revolution if we don't get a handle on this, and I am pretty sure that revolution would come from the Right, which would not be pretty. I had dinner with my libertarian friend last night, and we both hope the next 50 years, at least, will be peaceful. That may be a lot to ask.

20121016-02 08:50 Pam Photo: Son and Daughter-in-Law

I want to share the happiness.



20121016-03 14:15 Ben Photo: Today's Seafood Lunch at Apple

...over white Nishiki sticky rice with nori shaker stuff.

Yum.

Most of my miso experience has been miso soup before sushi. Miso, which is fermented soy done in one of those many specialized ways in which soy can be fermented, has a strong flavor. In soup form, it's barely noticeable, if still quite distinctive. Applied as a paste or batter or whatever to a mild fish like cod, it revs things up a bit. Inside, the tender, moist cod flakes were still pure cod, cooked enough to firm up and flakify the flesh; if I may introduce this new verb, in future, we may speak of flakification. (No, I don't think so. Scratch new verb.) The crust and top layer of fish, though, emphasized that miso itself is less gentle than the soup made of it. I am still pondering whether this is a way I'd like to eat fish more often, or less often. Definitely different, very much its own thing. Definitely, delicious and worthy. Definitely, I liked it; whether I would prefer it to other ways of preparing cod is less clear. Without question, it's always good to try new thing, to step outside one's bento...

The pickled cabbage, which was a more emphatic purple than my photo would suggest, was very crisp, and had an awesome delayed pucker factor. Crunchy pickled cabbage laid down a nice contrast to soft, resilient fish. The sauteed cabbage julienne and shiitake were a nice contrast in both flavor and texture, to each other, and with the rest of the dish as well. Very nice variety of flavors and textures - and color! - on this dish. The Japanese Kabocha squash was very like butternut; dense, firm, rich, and sweet.



Miso Baked Cod over Nisiki Rice with Pickled Cabbage, Kabocha Squash, Cabbage-Shitaki Sautee

[20121016-04](#)

16:31 Art

Re: "My Take: 'I'm Spiritual but Not Religious' Is a Cop-Out" (reply to Pam, FotM Newsletter #240)

I know this is a little late but as part of my recently completed trip we spent a few days in New York and saw the Broadway play, *Book of Mormon*. Absolutely hilarious. Best thing I've seen since the Andrew Lloyd Webber days. It

has nothing to do with the election but does poke a lot of fun at the Mormon religion and beliefs. Of course, any thinking person who sees it will see the same folibles in every religion. It has played to sold out houses for a year now in New York and has just launched a nationwide performance schedule. See it if you have the chance.

<a href="#">20121016-05</a>	16:41	Pam	Re: "My Take: 'I'm Spiritual but Not Religious' Is a Cop-Out" (reply to Art, above)
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That would be fun. I saw the playwrights interviewed on the Daily Show (I think it was). It sounds like a very irreverent play, just my cup of tea. I wonder if Mitt has seen it? Is everyone going to watch tonight's debate? If you do, you can tell me about it tomorrow. I can't bear to watch.

<a href="#">20121016-06</a>	16:51	SandyI	Video: Is This Woman for Real?
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Is this woman for real? You have to watch this...this woman is serious.

Video: "Please Move the Deer Crossings!" (<http://www.youtube-nocookie.com/embed/CI8UPHMzZm8?rel=0>).

[Absolutely classic! And this poor woman is going to vote! I hate to ask, but could she be blonde? Actually, the voice sounded a lot like Michele Bachmann... –SteveB]

<a href="#">20121016-07</a>	17:19	Art	Re: Video: Is This Woman for Real? (reply to SandyI, above)
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And we wonder how some of our candidates can get away with what they do. All part of the dumbing down of America. Worth a listen.



[http://longisland.about.com/od/familiessinglesseniors/ss/HofstraDutchFestival\\_9.htm](http://longisland.about.com/od/familiessinglesseniors/ss/HofstraDutchFestival_9.htm)



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

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## **FRIENDS OF THE MIDDLE** **NEWSLETTER #250 — OCT. 18, 2012**

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

**INDEX: Click here.**

### **The Plethora of Disqualifying Lies Itemized**

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

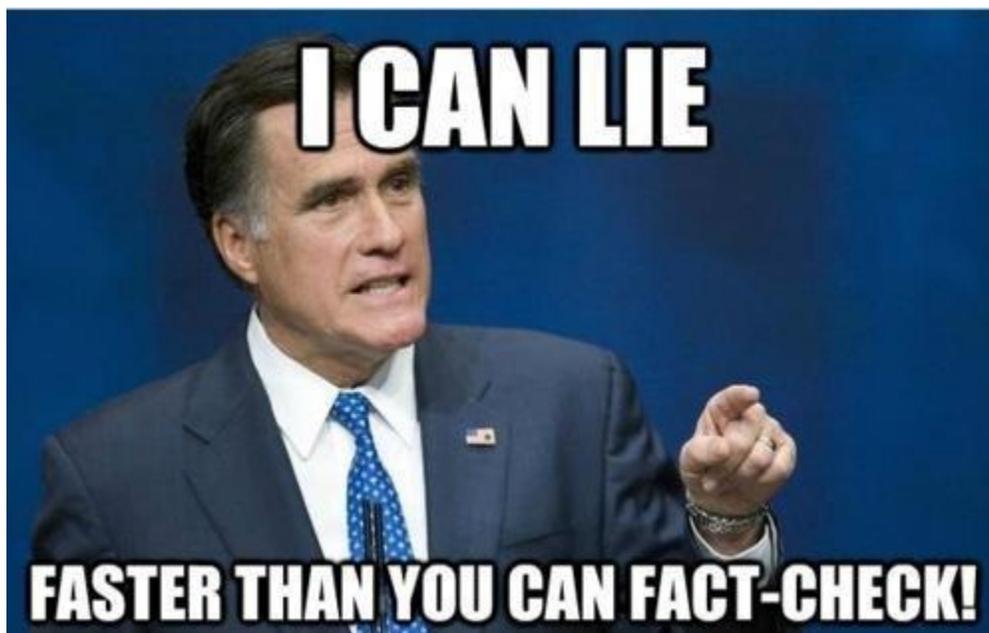
*"The liar's punishment is not in the least that he is not believed, but that he cannot believe anyone else." —George Bernard Shaw*

*"The income tax has made liars out of more Americans than golf." —Will Rogers*

*"Liar, liar, pants on fire." —The Castaways*

"Mitt Romney's Entirely Untrue, Objectively False Statements" by Nick Wing, Huffington Post

Oct. 17, 2012, ([http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/10/17/mitt-romney-false-statements\\_n\\_1965351.html?utm\\_hp\\_ref=politics#slide=1640939](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/10/17/mitt-romney-false-statements_n_1965351.html?utm_hp_ref=politics#slide=1640939))



It's impossible to spend the larger part of six consecutive years campaigning for president of the United States of America without saying a lot. Some of what candidates say is inspiring, but most of it isn't. A lot of it is true, but only partially. On certain occasions, however, the words we hear are just plain false.

In a political world up to its neck in spin and half-truths, this "malarkey" or "baloney," if you will, stands isolated from fact. Sometimes it's told deliberately, other times it's accidental. On some occasions, it's apparently told in private to donors, and then completely disavowed later.

Whatever the reason or manner, GOP presidential candidate Mitt Romney has managed to run a campaign laden with numerous completely, totally, 100 percent untrue statements.

The reason is simple: Romney says a lot of things that are objectively false. That's not a recent revelation. Steve Benen over at the Maddow Blog has put together an exhaustive chronicle of Romney's misadventures in truth-telling (<http://maddowblog.msnbc.com/news/2012/10/12/14397013-chronicling-mitts-mendacity-vol-xxxviii?lite>).

He's written nearly 40 editions, and it's still growing. PolitiFact's webpage for Romney's "pants on fire" statements looks like a blazing inferno (<http://www.politifact.com/personalities/mitt-romney/statements/byruling/pants-fire/>).

Even the satirists at The Onion have called Romney out, joking that he's adopting a last-minute campaign strategy of just "lying more" (see below).

Below is our list of some of Romney's most prominent factually deficient statements, a number of which Romney repeats frequently. Give them a look, vote, and tell us what we missed in the comments below.

### 1. My Name Is...

At a GOP presidential debate last November, Romney followed CNN host Wolf Blitzer's lead, giving his own attempt at an introduction.

"I'm Mitt Romney -- and yes Wolf, that's also my first name," the former governor offered.

That is entirely, completely, 100 percent, not true.

Romney's first name is Willard. Willard Mitt Romney: Male, 65 years old, married, white, businessman-turned-governor-turned-potential-next president of the United States of America. His father, George Romney, a Mexican-born governor and onetime presidential candidate, named him after J. Willard Marriott, of Marriott hotel fame. His middle name, "Mitt," was apparently an homage to his father's cousin, Milton "Mitt" Romney.

So, what Romney really should have said was, "I'm Mitt Romney -- and yes Wolf, that was the nickname of my first cousin once removed."

### 2. Obama Made Things Worse -- On Purpose

In announcing his candidacy back in 2011, Romney gave birth to an untruth that has become a focal point of his campaign.

"Barack Obama has failed America. When he took office, the economy was in recession. He made it worse," Romney declared.

He's since broadened that claim in a number of ways, the falsest of them perhaps his suggestion that Obama "knowingly slowed down our recovery" in order to create a climate that would allow for the passage of health care reform.

None of this is true.

If the point Romney had tried to make was that the economy is still weak, he would have been correct. Instead, he made a false statement in claiming that Obama had worsened the recession. Key economic indicators in areas such as the unemployment rate, GDP growth and the stock market suggest that the economy has begun to climb out of recession, though more slowly than anyone could have hoped.

In fact, when Romney was pressed on these facts in the days following his announcement, he ran from his earlier statement, saying that he "didn't say things are worse."

The second part of Romney's deceit comes from his twisted interpretation of *The Escape Artists*, a book by Noam Scheiber. The magnitude of Romney's untruth regarding Obama's supposed willful undermining of economic recovery is actually quite vast, but here's how *New York Magazine's* Jonathan Chait condensed the key takeaway:

First, and most importantly, at no point did anybody in the Obama administration ever believe that passing the Affordable Care Act would "slow down the recovery." Nothing close to that is ever described. Romney presents the book as revealing that Obama believed health-care reform, through its "big gummint" regulations, would harm the recovery, but cackling that he wanted to pass it out of some belief that Americans wouldn't notice mass economic suffering. This bears no relationship to anything the book says.

### 3. Mitt's Tax Plan

"I indicated as I announced my tax plan that the key principles included the following. First, that high-income people would continue to pay the same share of the tax burden that they do today. And second, that there would be a reduction in taxes paid by middle-income taxpayer," Romney said in an interview with *Fortune Magazine*, responding to a criticism of his plan by the non-partisan Tax Policy Center. "We are not going reduce the share of taxes paid by high-income individuals, and we're certainly not going to increase the taxes paid by middle-income taxpayers."

Romney and his campaign have since made repeated attempts to reinforce their claim that the tax plan will lower the burden on all Americans and still remain deficit neutral, all by eliminating loopholes -- which they've refuse to specify.

Well, that sounds nice, but it isn't true. It can't be, and Romney keeps saying it. The math just isn't on his side. At the bare minimum, Romney has said he'd reduce income tax rates by 20 percent, repeal the estate tax and eliminate the alternative minimum tax. Without the details about which tax loopholes and deductions he'd eliminate to pay for it, the Tax Policy Center and a number of other analysts have maintained that Romney's blueprint would actually provide a windfall for the richest Americans, while shifting some of the burden onto the middle class.

From what Romney is saying, there's no way his tax plan would work. Simply saying that it would, without providing any additional detail to back it up, hasn't changed any expert's mind.

But that hasn't stopped Romney from continuing to insist that the math makes sense depending on which budget baseline and reports you look at. It turns out the "six studies" Romney and Paul Ryan have turned to for support on their plan, don't actually back them up, at least not in the way they claim.

### 4. Obamacare, Romneycare, and Mandates

This has always been one of Romney's most glaring vulnerabilities. He's claimed that he didn't support an individual mandate on health insurance and insisted that he never said his plan for Massachusetts' health care reform should be used as a national model.

He's also attempted to portray Obamacare as a law that will rob Americans of choice when it comes to choosing their health insurance, and claimed inaccurately at the second presidential debate that Obamacare has increased insurance premiums by \$2,500 a year.

This is absolutely false.

Romney was once an unapologetic supporter of the individual mandate, and quite publicly in fact, at least until his most recent foray into presidential politics. Romney has also attempted to destroy the notion that he believed the Massachusetts model should be replicated nationally. Of course, this becomes difficult when numerous op-eds and interviews emerge showing a Romney who encouraged health care reformers to adopt the individual mandate, which Obamacare has since done, in order to craft a system that can offer affordable health care to a greater number of Americans.

Romney also appears to have repeatedly and deliberately misled about details of Obamacare to portray it as a plan that eliminates health insurance choice by design. The Affordable Care Act, implemented through state-regulated exchanges, is designed to give consumers options about which private plans they want for coverage.

As The Huffington Post's Jeffrey Young points out, Romney's math on the rising costs of health care insurance is wrong. The total average increase of premiums from 2009 through 2012 has been \$2,370 -- not the \$2,500 a year stated by Romney. The average hike in the employee's share comes to \$801 over that period.

Health insurance premiums almost doubled from 2002 to 2012 as the cost of health care continues to rise faster than the economy has grown, but has slowed in recent years.

Read more from Young's report at [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/10/16/presidential-debate-2012\\_n\\_1970698.html?utm\\_hp\\_ref=politics#129\\_romney-falsely-claims-health-insurance-premiums-grew-2500-a-year](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/10/16/presidential-debate-2012_n_1970698.html?utm_hp_ref=politics#129_romney-falsely-claims-health-insurance-premiums-grew-2500-a-year):

Mitt Romney's assertion that health insurance premiums have gotten more expensive by \$2,500-a-year during President Barack Obama's presidency is false.

Health insurance premiums for a family plan cost an average \$15,745 this year, of which workers pay \$4,316 on average and the employer picks up the rest, according to a survey of more than 2,000 employers conducted by the Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation and the Health Research and Educational Trust. In 2009, Obama's first year in office, an average family plan cost \$13,375 and the average employee's share was \$3,515.

The total average increase during those years was \$2,370 -- less than Romney claimed premiums increased each year under Obama. The average hike in the employee's share comes to \$801. Republican vice presidential nominee Paul Ryan made a claim similar to Romney's during his debate with Vice President Joe Biden last week.

Health insurance premiums almost doubled from 2002 to 2012 as the cost of health care continues to rise faster than the economy has grown, but has slowed in recent years.

"Premium growth is at historic lows," Maulik Joshi, president of the Health Research and Educational Trust and vice president for research at the American Hospital Association said in a news release when the organizations issued their survey findings last month.

This trend, however, doesn't fulfill a promise Obama made during the 2008 presidential campaign to reduce family health care premiums by \$2,500 a year.

## 5. 'Binders Full of Women'

Defending his credentials on women's issues during the second presidential debate, Romney claimed that he'd sought out female candidates to fill his cabinet as governor of Massachusetts. Romney said that, at his

direction, a women's group put together "binders full of women" who were qualified for various positions. Romney then boasted about how many of them he'd gone on to hire.

Romney's story is a work of fiction.

As The Huffington Post's Laura Bassett reports, the situation played out differently:

In fact, Romney did not direct women's groups to bring him female candidates, *Boston Phoenix* reporter David Bernstein points out. A non-partisan collaboration of women's groups called Massachusetts Government Appointments Project (MassGAP) was responsible for the effort in 2002, when the group's leaders realized that women held only 30 percent of the top appointed positions in the state.

MassGAP had independently prepared the binder before they knew who would win the governorship. Furthermore, according to a later MassGAP study, Romney may be truthful in touting his 42 percent female-appointment rate during his first two and a half years as governor, but that figure ignores the fact that the number of women in high-level appointed positions actually declined to 27.6 percent during his full tenure.

## 6. Raiding Medicare

"There's only one president that I know of in history that robbed Medicare, \$716 billion to pay for a new risky program of his own that we call 'Obamacare,'" Romney said during an interview on CBS' "60 Minutes."

There's not a shred of truth to this.

The figure Romney points to is actually a \$716 billion cost cut out of Medicare over the next decade. According to a report from the non-partisan Congressional Budget Office, Obamacare will effectively save \$716 billion, while maintaining the same operations and fulfilling promises to Medicare recipients. Under Obama's plan, these savings would then be reallocated to implement other parts of the Affordable Care Act. Notably, the same savings appear in Rep. Paul Ryan's budget.

## 7. Dog on a Roof

Romney once strapped his Irish Setter Seamus and its crate to the roof of the family station wagon during trip to Canada in 1983. The whole bizarre incident has been a huge nuisance for the GOP presidential candidate. Seriously, it even has it's own Wikipedia page.

In his many efforts to explain what happened on that voyage, Romney has told people both that his dog liked "fresh air," and that the crate was, in fact, air tight.

It isn't possible for both statements to be accurate.

Seamus either liked "fresh air," or was sealed into an air-tight transportation chamber. It was more likely neither, but it certainly can't be both.

## 8. Welfare Reform

Romney and his campaign went all in on an all-out falsehood this summer, claiming in interviews and ads that Obama ended a requirement that people on welfare must meet certain work requirements.

Despite being called baseless and factually incorrect -- which they are -- Romney has defended the attacks and furthered their use in campaign speeches and anti-Obama attack ads.

The Huffington Post's Arthur Delaney breaks down the distinction between fact and fiction:

Here is what actually happened: At the request of several states -- including two with Republican governors -- the Obama administration announced in July that it would consider waiving certain federal welfare rules if states have ideas for "demonstration projects" they promise can increase welfare employment outcomes by 20 percent (states are required to maintain certain percentages of welfare beneficiaries in work activities or else face penalties). The administration has not announced that it has issued any waivers.

But instead of saying something to the effect that the administration has potentially removed welfare work requirements, or perhaps opened the door for their eventual removal -- even those phrasings would be a big stretch -- the Romney campaign has been saying, "Obama quietly ended work requirements for welfare."

## 9. 'You Didn't Build That'

When Obama uttered the four words, "You didn't build that" at a campaign event over the summer, Republicans worked themselves into a frenzy trying to paint it as proof that Obama is an anti-business president who demonizes entrepreneurship and believes the government is solely responsible for economic success. They even dedicated an entire day to the phrase at the Republican National Convention. Weeks later, DNC planners were no doubt wishing Romney's "47 percent" video had leaked earlier.

But unlike that video, the "you didn't build that" campaign was built on an absolute mischaracterization and false premise.

Besides the fact that this small segment was cherry-picked out of larger speech to make an argument that Obama wasn't actually trying to make, the numbers don't back up the GOP's assertion. Over the course of his first term, Obama has enacted a series of small business tax cuts, incentives and loan programs. Monthly data for small businesses has also shown modest gains in some key areas.

Bloomberg *Businessweek* relayed one of those points earlier this year:

Job creation at small companies has also been pretty robust when compared with the previous recovery. In the 33 months since the current recovery began, small employers added 2.6 million jobs, a 2.9 percent increase in employment, ADP figures show. By contrast, in the first 33 months of the recovery from the 2001 recession, small employers added 1.8 million jobs, a 2.1 percent increase.

## 10. Bain Capital Timeline

Romney says he played no part in executive decision-making related to Bain Capital after 1999, as he left the company to organize the 2002 Salt Lake City Winter Olympics.

Romney has steadfastly clung to this unmitigated untruth.

There is a wealth of evidence, most of it provided by Romney himself, that would suggest he remained at least somewhat actively involved in Bain's decision-making processes until well after the 1999 date he provided.

Reports by the *Boston Globe*, Mother Jones and Talking Points Memo all pointed to Romney's own filings with the Securities and Exchange Commission, which listed him as the "sole stockholder, chairman of the board, chief executive officer, and president" of Bain, an "executive" who drew a six-figure salary in 2001 and 2002.

According to a report from The Huffington Post's Jason Cherkis and Ryan Grim, subsequent testimony from Romney in front of the SEC appeared to corroborate the dates listed on those documents.

Read their entire piece for a more in-depth account of Romney's Bain departure:  
[http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/07/12/mitt-romney-bain-departure\\_n\\_1669006.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/07/12/mitt-romney-bain-departure_n_1669006.html).

## 11. Hands on Our Hearts

At a campaign stop in February, Romney made his best effort to promote American exceptionalism with a rousing, and entirely false, claim.

"We are the only people on the earth that put our hand over our heart during the playing of the national anthem," he said.

There is zero truth to this unusual claim.

The United States isn't the only country to do this. Not even close. *The Washington Post* provided an anecdotal smattering of additional examples in a subsequent fact check, but Romney is just plain wrong on this one.

## 12. Auto Bailout

Romney has claimed he deserves credit for the turnaround of the American auto industry because Obama took his ideas in helping to foster its eventual recovery.

"I pushed the idea of a managed bankruptcy, and finally when that was done, and help was given, the companies got back on their feet," Romney said in an interview earlier this year. "So, I'll take a lot of credit for the fact that this industry has come back."

He also tried to walk a similar line, repeating this relentless falsehood at the second presidential debate.

Weeks after the 2008 election, Romney penned an op-ed in the *New York Times* titled "Let Detroit Go Bankrupt" ([http://www.nytimes.com/2008/11/19/opinion/19romney.html?\\_r=4](http://www.nytimes.com/2008/11/19/opinion/19romney.html?_r=4)). In it, he argued that the proposed bailout for the American automobile industry would prevent it from making the changes it would need to achieve longterm success.

The eventual assistance offered to American car companies, first by President George W. Bush and then under Obama, didn't prevent all of them from going bankrupt. Chrysler and GM both filed for bankruptcy in mid-2009, and Romney has used this point to attempt to draw parallels to his stated plan, as well as argue that Obama wasted billions of dollars by not forcing them into bankruptcy earlier.

But David Shepardson of the *Detroit News* points out that there are clear differences between how Obama acted and what Romney had planned:

Obama's auto task force used a section under the bankruptcy code to use government money to buy the "good assets" of GM and Chrysler in bankruptcy by outbidding anyone else, allowing the companies to exit in just 40 days.

If Romney's course had been adopted, GM and Chrysler could have been in bankruptcy for months or years before exiting -- and would have had much more debt on their balance sheets.

## 13. Iran Nuclear Policy

In March, Romney crafted an attack on Obama that he's since echoed when criticizing the president on foreign policy: "This is a president who has failed to put in place crippling sanctions against Iran. He's also failed to communicate that military options are on the table and in fact in our hand, and that it's unacceptable to America for Iran to have a nuclear weapon."

This claim holds no connection to the truth.

The Obama administration, together with Congress, has passed measures that impose tough new sanctions on Iran's energy sector and financial system. Together with key western allies, the U.S. has also passed sanctions through the UN Security Council that target the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps, which controls the Iranian nuclear program. The U.S. also pressed European Union countries to agree to an oil embargo on Iran that took effect this past summer.

Obama has also repeatedly said that it is unacceptable for Iran to get a nuclear weapon. He told Jeffrey Goldberg of *The Atlantic*.

"I think both the Iranian and the Israeli governments recognize that when the United States says it is unacceptable for Iran to have a nuclear weapon, we mean what we say."

#### 14. Disenfranchising Veterans

The Obama administration tried to take away early voting rights for veterans in Ohio, Romney has claimed.

This is 100 percent false.

When Ohio Republicans eliminated early voting on weekends for all except veterans this year, the Obama administration sued to keep the Saturday and Sunday window open for all voters.

The Romney camp attempted to spin this as a move to strip veterans of voting privileges, when in fact it was a move by the administration to expand voting opportunities for everyone.

#### 15. AAA Credit Rating

Obama is to blame for the nation's AAA credit rating being downgraded, Romney has suggested on a number of instances.

But the actual truth tells a much different story here.

According to an analysis from Standard & Poor's, the rating agency that downgraded America's credit rating from AAA to AA+ in the summer of 2011, the decision to downgrade was partially because "the majority of Republicans in Congress continue to resist any measure that would raise revenues."

As has been reported, Obama struck a deal to avoid the growing threat of default but was undermined by Tea Party Republicans who backed out of the compromise at the last minute, continuing their game of political brinksmanship. As S&P put it, "The statutory debt ceiling and the threat of default have become political bargaining chips in the debate over fiscal policy." Republican obstructionism played a significant part in the downgrade.

#### 16. Obama's Jobs Plan

Romney has frequently attempted to claim that Obama has not put forth a jobs plan. At the Republican National Convention in Tampa, Romney said, "And unlike the president, I have a plan to create 12 million new jobs."

Another unrestrained, truth-free statement.

Obama's jobs plan, the American Jobs Act (2011), was shot down by Congress after he promised that his plan wouldn't add to the deficit. While Obama's legislation hasn't passed, it does, in fact, exist.

As for Romney's plan to create "12 million new jobs," Moody Analytics projects that the untouched economy would produce something close to that over the next 4 years, regardless of who is in the White House.

## 17. Obama Apologizes For America

Over the course of his campaign, Romney has frequently suggested that Obama is guilty of "apologizing for America" instead of standing up for the nation's interests.

This is one of Romney's favorite criticisms, and entirely untrue.

Fact-checkers and other people with eyes and ears have consistently debunked Romney's claims each time they're made, pointing out that the word "apology" simply doesn't apply to the actions and words Obama has used.

PolitiFact perhaps put it best in the wake of Romney's highly criticized decision to use the terrorist attack on a U.S. consulate in Libya as an opportunity to criticize the president:

This is a theme for Romney: He has long accused Obama of apologizing for America, starting in 2010, when Romney published *No Apology: The Case for American Greatness*. Since then, he has repeatedly criticized what he has called an "apology tour" by Obama shortly after he took office. PolitiFact has examined those speeches, consulted experts on speechmaking and apologies, and rated Romney's claim Pants on Fire.

Obama might have some things he thinks America needs to apologize for, but sorry, he's not saying so.

## 18. Trade Deals

On numerous occasions, Romney has claimed that Obama "has not signed one new free-trade agreement" since entering office.

That's inarguably false.

The president has signed multiple free-trade deals, with Colombia, Panama and South Korea. They've all been approved by Congress and signed by Obama.

The agreements didn't go over without a hitch. Organized labor forces opposed some of the specifics, but ironically, many of the pro-business, GOP-aligned forces that Romney represents hailed their passage as a strong step in the right direction. Romney, on the other hand, has chosen to pretend they don't exist.

His campaign claims the statement is strictly true, arguing that the deals are not "new" because they were first negotiated under the Bush administration, and only completed under this administration.

[19. Then there's the infamous 47% lie caught on hidden video, insinuating that 47% of the population are scum—everyone on disability, welfare, or Social Security, anyone going to college, or anyone simply paying payroll taxes because they didn't make enough money to have to pay income taxes. But to me, all that seems like a lying subset of the real, underlying truth—that 99% of the populace are scum to Romney. –SteveB]

[20. See: "Newsflash for Mitt: The Recovery's Not So Sluggish" by Jared Bernstein, Salon, Oct. 17, 2012, ([http://www.salon.com/2012/10/17/newsflash\\_for\\_mitt\\_the\\_recoverys\\_not\\_so\\_sluggish/](http://www.salon.com/2012/10/17/newsflash_for_mitt_the_recoverys_not_so_sluggish/)). "It's understandable that Romney's painting a grim picture of the economy, but the numbers don't quite bear him out." –SteveB]

"Romney Proudly Explains How He's Turned Campaign Around: 'I'm Lying More,' He Says" by The Onion

Oct. 8, 2012, (<http://www.theonion.com/articles/romney-proudly-explains-how-hes-turned-campaign-ar,29845/>)

(Romney and his staffers say the candidate's new lying strategy has already paid significant dividends.)

(BOSTON) For weeks many Beltway insiders had written off the Romney campaign as dead, saying the candidate had dug himself into too deep a hole with too little time to recover. However, with a month to go before ballots are cast, Romney has pulled even with President Obama, and the former Massachusetts governor credits his rejuvenated campaign to one, singular tactic: lying a lot.

"I'm lying a lot more, and my lies are far more egregious than they've ever been," a smiling Romney told reporters while sitting in the back of his campaign bus, adding that when faced with a choice to either lie or tell the truth, he will more than likely lie. "It's a strategy that works because when I lie, I'm essentially telling people what they want to hear, and people really like hearing things they want to hear. Even if they sort of know that nothing I'm saying is true."

"It's a freeing strategy, really, because I don't have to worry about facts or being accurate or having any concrete positions of any kind," Romney added.

Romney said he is telling at least 80 percent more lies now than he was two months ago. Buoyed by his strong debate performance, which by his own admission included 40 or 50 instances of lying in one 90-minute period, the candidate said he will continue to "just openly lie [his] ass off" until the Nov. 6 election.

Whether it's a senior citizen, military family, working mother, businessman, or middle-class American, Romney said, he will lie to every single one of them as often as he can if that's what it takes to win the presidency.

"The best part is, it's really easy to lie," said Romney, who added that voicing whatever untruths come into his mind at any given moment is an easy thing to do because all it requires is opening his mouth and talking. "For example, if someone accuses me of having a tax plan that makes no discernible sense, I just lie and say that I do have a tax plan that makes sense. I also say there is a study that backs up my plan. See that? Simple. None of it is remotely true, of course, but now we're moving on to the next topic because people are usually too afraid to ask me straight up if I'm lying, because that is apparently not something you ask someone who is running for president."

Moreover, Romney said, if anyone does accuse him of lying, he will simply say he is not lying, which he noted is just an extension of the overall strategy.

"So, if I'm talking to retirees," Romney continued, "I lie and say I'll fight tooth and nail to save Medicare, which causes them to applaud. On the other hand, if I'm talking to the party base, I lie and say we have to cut Medicare, which causes them to applaud. So, you see, my goal here is to get everyone applauding for me, because if everyone is clapping their hands, standing on their feet, and shouting my name, that means they like me and will vote for me."

Romney's campaign advisers said that they adopted the strategy of lying a lot after realizing several things: (1) Lying sounds good, especially when the truth sounds bad, (2) the American media doesn't care if you lie, (3) the American people don't care if you lie, and (4) it's okay to lie if you are very, very desperate to become the president of the United States.

"If we're going to be carried into the White House, it's going to have to be on a wave of lies," Romney campaign manager Matt Rhoades said. "Most important, Mitt is comfortable when he is lying because then he doesn't have to say anything bad. And in this last month it's important that we just let Mitt be Mitt, whoever the hell that is."

"It's late in the game, but this campaign has finally found its groove," Rhoades added. "And that groove is lying. Bald-faced, make-no-apologies, dirty, filthy lying."

According to Romney, amidst all the lies, there is only one thing that remains true.

"I literally have no clue where I stand on any single issue at this point," said Romney, adding that when it comes to women's rights, gay rights, health care, the middle class, the economy, or the U.S. military, all he knows is how to lie about them. "I understand what other people want. And what I've learned, especially in the past week, is that in order to be a viable candidate for the White House, that's all you really need to know."

Following the interview, Romney told various reporters that, if elected, he would save the newspaper industry.



CLAIMS THAT OBAMA STRIPPED WORK REQUIREMENTS FROM WELFARE ARE CHECKED



The Miami Herald

20121017-03 15:44 Pam Re: The Plethora of Disqualifying Lies Itemized (reply to SteveB, above)

This is great stuff, but I fear that the folks who need to see it most won't. I used to share stuff on Facebook, until I was asked by a relative not to. I was so stunned by the request I complied immediately. Occasionally I'll share something, but I try to keep a low profile--except with all of you. I know that even if you don't agree with me, you're not going to get mad at me.

I'm with Jon Stewart: "For the love of God, please let this (campaign) stop!"

20121017-06 18:24 Art Re: The Plethora of Disqualifying Lies Itemized (reply to Pam, above)

Read the latest lie on the "binder gals". Tell your relative to stuff it.

20121017-01 06:46 Tom "An Honest Debate About Gun Violence"

Here are some interesting statistics... Great article.

With all the political correctness and propaganda propagated by the media, here are some statistics, which just might help you focus on the issues.

In the second presidential debate of 2012, President Obama clearly stated that he favors, and will support, a reinstatement of the so-called Assault Weapons Ban. (Scary Looking Weapons Ban) In fact, he said all military weapons should be kept out of the hands of civilians.

So, with only 3 weeks to the election, you might want to review the statistics and come up with your own solution.

First, a quote from the article below:

...gun violence in America largely consists of black and Hispanic males shooting other black and Hispanic males. According to a study by the Brady Center to Prevent Gun Violence, based on data collected by the Center for Disease Control, 1.5 white Americans in 100,000 were shot and killed in 2007 — still higher than the Canadian rate of 0.6, but, given the population densities of the two nations, at least in the same ballpark. On the other hand, **the rate for Hispanic Americans was an alarming 5.2 per 100,000 — more than three times the rate among whites Americans. The rate for African Americans was a grotesque 18.1 per 100,000, or roughly 12 times the rate among whites Americans. The rate for African-American males was an obscene 37.59 per 100,000.**

Those are the *victim* rates. The ethnic disparities among gun homicide *offenders* mirror the disparities among victims. **Though blacks make up less than 13% of the U.S. population, year after year they commit more than half of all gun homicides...**

"An Honest Debate About Gun Violence" by Mark Goldblatt, The Daily Caller

Oct. 2, 2012, (<http://dailycaller.com/2012/10/02/an-honest-debate-about-gun-violence/?print=1>)

Few things in American public life are as predictable as gun control advocates taking to the airwaves and editorial pages in the immediate aftermath of a shooting spree to call for more stringent gun control measures. The summer of 2012 was a banner season for anti-gun rhetoric since it featured not one but two horrific incidents: the July 20th massacre of patrons at a movie theater in Aurora, Colorado, and the August 5th massacre of worshippers at a Sikh temple in Oak Creek, Wisconsin.

The absolute worst time to engage in such a debate is in the immediate aftermath of a shooting, with our emotions still raw, and with images of the carnage still fresh in our minds — which, of course, is the reason the political left wants to have the debate while the yellow police tape is still up at the crime scenes. But as time passes, the potential for a saner debate increases. To ask, for example, whether a civilian should be allowed to purchase a high-capacity “drum magazine” for a semi-automatic weapon, as the Colorado shooter was allegedly able to do, is not to dismantle the Second Amendment. Would such a restriction be the proverbial camel’s nose under the tent? Maybe. But it’s not an unreasonable question to ask.

That debate, however, has nothing to do with the broader problem of gun violence in the United States. Though both the Colorado and Wisconsin massacres were violent and did involve guns, they were aberrations. Legislation aimed at reducing the likelihood or deadliness of such incidents will have little or no impact on how many Americans get shot and killed from year to year.

[I happen to remember that they said that about seatbelts too. –SteveB]

Gun control advocates want to yoke their efforts to ban many types of firearms, including semi-automatic weapons with legitimate self-defense uses, onto our collective revulsion at the bloodshed wrought by a couple of maniacs. They argue that America has become a shooting gallery — at least when compared with other industrialized nations. If only Americans would stop clinging irrationally to their Second Amendment right to bear arms, we could cut gun violence down to, say, Canadian levels.

The argument seems plausible, at least at first glance. Canada has long had some of the strictest gun control laws in the world, and in 2007 Americans were almost six times more likely to be the victim of a gun homicide than Canadians were. The rate in Canada was 0.6 per 100,000 people; in America, it was 3.4 per 100,000.

End of discussion, right?

Except if you dig down into the numbers, the issue becomes more complicated. The plague of gun violence in the U.S., it turns out, is not as widespread or as random as many gun control advocates would have us believe. Indeed, gun violence in America largely consists of black and Hispanic males shooting other black and Hispanic males. According to a study by the Brady Center to Prevent Gun Violence, based on data collected by the Center for Disease Control, 1.5 white Americans in 100,000 were shot and killed in 2007 — still higher than the Canadian rate of 0.6, but, given the population densities of the two nations, at least in the same ballpark. On the other hand, the rate for Hispanic Americans was an alarming 5.2 per 100,000 — more than three times the rate among whites Americans. The rate for African Americans was a grotesque 18.1 per 100,000, or roughly 12 times the rate among whites Americans. The rate for African-American *males* was an obscene 37.59 per 100,000.

Those are the *victim* rates. The ethnic disparities among gun homicide *offenders* mirror the disparities among victims. Though blacks make up less than 13% of the U.S. population, year after year they commit more than half of all gun homicides. The numbers for Hispanic offenders are harder to pin down since law enforcement agencies tend to group them with white offenders — perhaps to make the black-white contrast seem less stark. But given the high rate of Hispanic victimization, and the fact that more than half of all homicide victims in the U.S. are acquainted with their killers, it seems safe to conclude that Hispanic offenders also commit gun homicides at substantially elevated rates.

Any honest discussion of gun violence, therefore, begins with the inconvenient truth that it’s disproportionately a black and Hispanic phenomenon. That makes last summer’s horrors in Colorado and Wisconsin exceptional on at least three levels: first, because of the body count; second, because of the weaponry; third, and most critically, because of the demographics of shooters and their victims.

Recognizing the centrality of ethnicity to the problem of gun violence is just another way of saying, “Guns don’t kill people. People kill people.” But it also underscores the gnarly politics of dealing with the issue. You likely *could* significantly reduce incidents of gun violence in the U.S., and save many black and Hispanic lives in the process, with mandatory sentencing. So, for example, if you’re convicted of using a gun to commit a crime, we could tack an extra five years onto the end of your sentence. If you discharge a gun while committing a crime, make it 15. If you shoot someone, make it 25. No exceptions. No plea bargains. No mercy.

If states began to adopt such sentencing guidelines, you likely *would* have a drastic reduction in gun homicides — not because violent criminals would necessarily be deterred, but because, once they're caught and convicted, they'd be incarcerated for much longer periods. It would therefore be a boon to the overwhelming majority of blacks and Hispanics, who are law-abiding citizens. But it would also require building many more prisons and filling them with mostly black and Hispanic males — which means that most blacks and Hispanics would oppose the effort. So too would every left-of-center advocacy group that fancies itself a guardian of minority interests.

So, yes, by all means, now that our emotions are no longer raw, let's have a national conversation about gun violence. But for once, how about an honest one?

(Mark Goldblatt is the author of "Bumper Sticker Liberalism." He teaches at Fashion Institute of Technology (SUNY).)

<a href="#">20121017-02</a>	14:07	Ben	Photo: Today's Seafood Lunch at Apple
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Flounder, or Albacore? What a terrible dilemma...

I did the albacore. Either would have been an excellent choice: the flounder looked great, too.

The logic went like this:

- We don't get flounder very often. It's a delicious, sweet, delicate white fish.
- Tuna is really yummy, especially if it's rare, and fresh enough to be flattered by tha.
- Flounder is really yummy. The vegetables are white beans (yum), with onions-tomatoes-bell peppers.
- Tuna from the pasta line, with no pasta. I don't get to eat as much of Chef Patricia's stuff these days, 'cause too much pasta is ... too much pasta.

Coin flip: stuck.

Snoop reconnaissance:

- Both dishes look very inviting.
- Chefs are doing pretty-plate on both lines.

Coin flip: there's no one in the pasta line. Bistro is stacked up.

Decision: Tuna

I know I'd have been well-rewarded either way. Hard to go wrong.

My gorgeous tuna filet looks like it was from that muscle that runs along the spine. It was dense, tender, rare at the center, very moist and fresh, even where cooked, and I never had to lift my knife off the tray: it just flayed itself out into tasty morsels, almost by itself. The asparagus was roasted perfectly: still crunchy at the core, and firm everywhere. I'm not sure how it was seasoned; sea salt and black pepper, perhaps, but it was just the right amount of whatever it was, enough for a little zing without being particularly noticeable. The cute little roasted red potatoes disappeared along with the rest, as they, too, were perfect, with a browned slightly crusty surface, and moist, fluffy tater inside. The tapenade was beautiful and so finely chopped as to be almost smooth, redolent of olive oil (of course), a rich burst of flavor.

Footnote: the twin cash registers have been replaced by a quartet of iPads, for a much cleaner, more efficient checkout process. Credit cards are now accepted, too.



Seared Albacore over Asparagus and Rosemary Taters

20121017-04 16:18 MarthaH "Five Key Issues Omitted from First Two Debates"

"Five Key Issues Omitted from First Two Debates" by Michael O'Brien, NBC News

Oct. 17, 2012, (<http://nbcpolitics.nbcnews.com/news/2012/10/17/14513694-five-key-issues-omitted-from-first-two-debates?lite>)

The first two debate meetings between President Barack Obama and GOP presidential nominee Mitt Romney have covered a broad array of issues, but some of the most pressing matters they would encounter as commander in chief were left unmentioned.

Among the topics covered by the two prime-time outings include taxes, the economy, jobs, Medicare, Social Security, education, immigration, Libya, China, energy, gun rights, contraception, abortion rights, and a whole host of other issues.

To be sure, the format of each debate and the actions of both Romney and Obama, in part, limited the issue scope in each debate. Romney frequently overrode the interjections and questions of moderator Jim Lehrer in the first debate, and the town-hall format of Tuesday evening's debate allowed undecided voters to pose questions in a discussion guided by CNN's Candy Crowley.

Moreover, some of these topics could work their way into the third Obama-Romney showdown, which is scheduled for Monday in Boca Raton, Fla. That debate will focus primarily on matters of foreign policy.

With that in mind, here's a look at the top five issues left unaddressed so far through the first two presidential debates:

FISCAL CLIFF

Regardless of the outcome of next month's election, Obama or Romney would almost assuredly encounter a potential fiscal crisis immediately upon being sworn into office.

While the topics of taxes, spending and entitlements were rampant during the first two debates, the so-called "fiscal cliff" looming at the beginning of 2013 presents a far more beguiling challenge for either candidate come January.

The fiscal cliff is a shorthand way of referencing the cocktail of automatic spending cuts and tax hikes set to take effect at the beginning of next year, the by-product of legislative gridlock which economists warn could do serious damage to the recovery.

Obama and Romney have each talked about their tax proposals, which would presumably compensate for the expiration of the 2001 Bush tax cuts at the end of this year, along with a two-year payroll tax cut initiated by Obama.

But the next president would have to juggle tax reform -- a politically tricky issue in its own right -- with having to reach an agreement to avert the effects of the "sequester."

When lawmakers reached a last-minute deal in the summer of 2011 to raise the nation's borrowing limit and avert default on U.S. debt, they included a provision that would trigger a series of deep cuts -- including steep reductions to defense spending -- set to take place at the end of 2012.

These automatic cuts were designed to be politically unpalatable in order to provide an automatic incentive for a bipartisan "supercommittee" of lawmakers (which was also established by the debt deal) to reach a consensus plan to address the nation's mounting debt.

Romney has been an ardent critic of those automatic defense cuts and made frequent mention of them on the campaign trail. But he didn't reference them at all in his first two debates versus Obama.

These looming challenges are unlikely to reach resolution in the lame-duck Congress. That means Obama or Romney, as president, will be forced to confront not just a single portion of their fiscal proposals, but rather, a series of them linked together. Such a consequential legislative fight could consume the first few months of 2013, if not longer.

## HOUSING MARKET

A troubled housing market and financial crisis related to over-extended mortgages are the root cause of America's current economic headache, but the topic received scant attention during the first two debates.

Obama took steps at the beginning of his first term meant to support struggling homeowners, and outlined an updated proposal in February -- but neither had much effect. One of Romney's earliest events during his bid for the Republican nomination, too, was in a neighborhood full of foreclosed homes in Nevada, one of the states hit hardest by the housing collapse.

But neither candidate paid lip service to the full severity of the housing market except as an aside in a larger discussion about the regulations on lenders included in the 2010 Dodd-Frank regulatory reform law.

Obama accused Romney of wishing to repeal that law, which the president asserted would eliminate rules on subprime housing loans.

"Dodd-Frank correctly says we need to have qualified mortgages, and if you give a mortgage that's not qualified, there are big penalties, except they didn't ever go on and define what a qualified mortgage was," Romney responded. "It's been two years. We don't know what a qualified mortgage is yet. So banks are reluctant to make loans, mortgages."

Viewers looking for more details about how Obama or Romney would handle Fannie Mae or Freddie Mac -- the troubled mortgage-lending giants that were taken into government conservatorship in 2008 -- also might have been

disappointed in the first two debates. Neither candidate explained how they would move the troubled companies off the government's books.

### IRAQ AND AFGHANISTAN

The winding-down wars in Iraq and Afghanistan received more attention during the lone vice presidential debate than they did during the first two meetings between Romney and Obama.

American combat troops have been in Afghanistan since 2001 and in Iraq since 2003, and Obama has begun the process of ending the wars in each country -- something of which he has been quick to remind voters during the debates.

Romney has sought to distinguish himself from Obama on both theaters, focusing his criticism on the pace at which Obama has withdrawn troops from both countries, and Obama's decision to set timelines by which American combat troops would leave both Iraq and Afghanistan.

"America's ability to influence events for the better in Iraq has been undermined by the abrupt withdrawal of our entire troop presence," Romney said earlier this month at a foreign policy speech.

On Afghanistan, Romney has also sought to paint stark differences between himself and Obama by arguing that Obama prematurely drew down "surge" troops from Afghanistan earlier this fall. Romney said he would have kept them there a few months longer, through the height of the fighting season.

Still, both Obama and Romney share the same expressed goal of all troops leaving Afghanistan by the end of 2014.

### EUROPE'S FISCAL CRISIS

The debt crises beguiling Greece, Spain, Italy and a host of other European nations have imperiled the health of the European Union and its currency, the Euro. Moreover, much of Europe has plunged into a double-dip recession, the effects of which have imperiled the American economic recovery.

But the still-serious situation in Europe has been little more than a punchline for the candidates through the first two presidential debates.

"If the president were re-elected, we'd go to almost \$20 trillion of national debt. This puts us on a road to Greece," Romney said in Tuesday night's debate, repeating a line that should sound familiar to anyone who's followed the Republican presidential nominee's stump speeches this year.

So serious was the situation in Europe that the president took to the White House briefing room in early June -- the same remarks in which he suggested the private sector was "doing fine" relative to the public-sector economy -- to warn about the impact the European debt crisis could have on the American economy.

"In the meantime, given the signs of weakness in the world economy, not just in Europe but also some softening in Asia, it's critical that we take the actions we can to strengthen the American economy right now," Obama said on June 8.

But the situation in Europe received no attention in the first two debates, even though the EU was just awarded the 2012 Nobel Peace Prize in part for its perseverance through a politically-trying period in its history.

### SAME-SEX MARRIAGE

Obama announced in June that his "evolution" on gay rights was complete, and that he supported the right of same-sex couples to marry.

Romney responded at the time by reiterating his opposition to gay and lesbians' ability to marry while calling it a "tender" issue that deserved sensitivity.

The president's announcement in June was heralded as historic, but also a politically shrewd move to energize young voters and his LGBT supporters, while also putting Romney in the difficult position of trying to strike a centrist note while not alienating the socially conservative voters who make up a core constituency of the GOP.

But given the magnitude and politics of that June announcement, it is striking that the topic of same-sex marriage didn't come up in the first two debates. (Even on another social issue, abortion and contraceptive rights, Romney stressed he believes "every woman in America" should have access to contraceptives.)

The absence of the conservative red meat on social issues is made all the more striking by comparing the first two debates of 2012 to the first debate of 2004, when President George W. Bush played up his opposition to same-sex marriage and used Sen. John Kerry's more moderate stance against the Democratic nominee.

"I believe in the sanctity of marriage. I think it's very important that we protect marriage as an institution, between a man and a woman," Bush said at his Oct. 13, 2004, meeting with Kerry.

"I proposed a constitutional amendment. The reason I did so was because I was worried that activist judges are actually defining the definition of marriage, and the surest way to protect marriage between a man and woman is to amend the Constitution."

But Kerry also stressed his opposition to same-sex marriage, too.

"The president and I share the belief that marriage is between a man and a woman. I believe that. I believe marriage is between a man and a woman," he said. "But I also believe that because we are the United States of America, we're a country with a great, unbelievable Constitution, with rights that we afford people, that you can't discriminate in the workplace. You can't discriminate in the rights that you afford people."

<a href="#">20121017-05</a>	16:36	Bill	Photo: Einstein Was Right #1
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A GENERATION LOOKING WITHOUT SEEING AND HEARING WITHOUT LISTENING...

"I fear the day when the technology overlaps with our humanity. The world will only have a generation of idiots." — Albert Einstein

Having a Coffee...



20121017-07

19:17

MarthaH

"Romney Challenged on How He Got the Binder Full of Women Managers"

REALLY?????

"Romney Challenged on How He Got the Binder Full of Women Managers" by Abby D. Phillip, ABC News

Oct. 17, 2012, ([http://abcnews.go.com/Politics/romney-challenged-binder-full-women-managers/story?id=17501797#.UH\\_p88XA-RQ](http://abcnews.go.com/Politics/romney-challenged-binder-full-women-managers/story?id=17501797#.UH_p88XA-RQ))

Mitt Romney's troubles with his "binder full of women" comment isn't over as Massachusetts women are challenging his version of how he got that binder and his record of hiring top women managers.

In answer to a question from a voter about pay discrepancies between men and women during Tuesday night's debate, Romney recalled how when he became governor of Massachusetts he sought out top level women.

"I went to my staff, and I said, 'How come all the people for these jobs are all men?' Romney said. "We took a concerted effort to go out and find women who had backgrounds that could be qualified to become members of our cabinet."

"I went to a number of women's groups and said, 'Can you help us find folks,' and they brought us whole binders full of women," Romney added.

He said his administration had the highest number of women in top positions of any governor in the country.

That version is under fire by a coalition of women's groups known as MassGAP, which is affiliated with the Massachusetts Women's Political Caucus. The group compiled the names of female applicants before Romney came to office and offered them to both Romney and his Democratic opponent Shannon O'Brien.

"It didn't really have anything to do with Romney asking women to give him names," said Carolyn Jones, who was secretary of the Massachusetts Womens' Political Caucus during the time that Romney was governor.

MassGAP, which is non-partisan, issued a statement saying that while the Romney administration started with women comprising 42 percent of newly appointed positions, by 2006, that number had dropped to 25 percent.

"So when the spotlight was on him, sure he paid some lip service. But when no one was looking, those levels plummeted to 25 percent, below where they were in the previous governor's administration," said Jesse Mermell, a Democratic selectwoman in Brookline, Mass., who was the executive director of the Massachusetts Women's Political Caucus from 2004 to 2008. During that time the organization commissioned a report on women in government positions in the state.

In response to the controversy, Romney tweeted from his official Twitter account today: "I understand the challenges women face and want to make it easier for them in the workplace." The message included a video of testimonials from women who served in Romney's cabinet as governor.

And a Romney campaign spokesman responded by emphasizing his cooperation with MassGAP in finding qualified women candidates.

"The incoming Romney administration worked with MassGAP to find the best qualified women for top positions in Massachusetts government," said Romney campaign spokesman Andrea Saul. "The efforts resulted in Massachusetts having the most women in top positions in the entire country."

The question about equal pay that prompted the "binders" answer was among several questions at the Hofstra University debate that were of particular interest to women, and the answers could be significant in this election as women voters have become a key demographic.

An ABC News/*Washington Post* poll in September found that among women registered voters, Obama's favorability plummeted from 57 percent in April to 46 percent.

And on Monday, a *USA Today*/Gallup Poll conducted after the first presidential debate, showed Romney within one point of Obama among likely women voters in swing states.

Faced with the same question about equal pay, Obama highlighted his administration's passage of the Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act and hit Romney for hesitating to state his position on the bill.

"I just want to point out that when Governor Romney's campaign was asked about the Lilly Ledbetter bill, whether he supported it, he said, 'I'll get back to you.'" Obama said.

A Romney campaign adviser, Ed Gillespie, has since acknowledged that Romney originally opposed the Ledbetter legislation, and his position is now that he would not change the existing law.

Obama also reminded women during the debate that Romney has vowed to cut federal funds to Planned Parenthood.

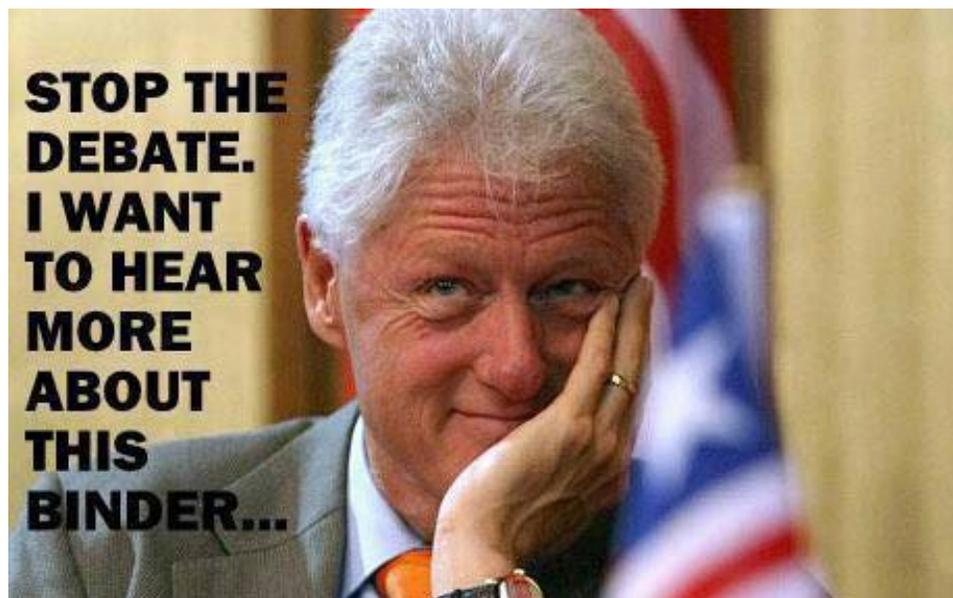
During a campaign stop in Virginia today Romney echoed a theme from the debate when he focused on where he says the Obama administration has hurt women the most: the economy.

"This president has failed America's women. They've suffered in terms of getting jobs, they've suffered in terms of falling into poverty," Romney said at an event in Chesapeake, VA on Wednesday. "That's what the women of America care about and the answers are coming from us, not from Barack Obama."

<a href="#">20121017-11</a>	20:29 Pam	Re: "Romney Challenged on How He Got the Binder Full of Women Managers" (reply to MarthaH, above)
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Could I be any more disgusted? I don't think so.

<a href="#">20121017-09</a>	19:35 SteveB	Re: "Romney Challenged on How He Got the Binder Full of Women Managers" (reply to MarthaH, above)
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[20121017-12](#) 20:32 Pam Re: "Romney Challenged on How He Got the Binder Full of Women Managers" (reply to SteveB, above)

Now THIS gives me a chuckle.

[20121017-08](#) 19:30 SteveB Video: FDR Warning About Today's Republicans in 1936

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SUZGkNAUSvY>

FDR tells the truth about the leaders of the modern Republican Party. Somehow, in 1936, he foresaw what would be happening NOW.

[20121017-10](#) 20:28 SteveB Amphibia

"New Amphibious Vehicle to Debut in US Claims Record Speed" by Claire Martin, MSN

Oct. 15, 2012, ([http://editorial.autos.msn.com/blogs/autosblogpost-tru.aspx?post=c30a04d9-d292-4ded-a9bb-eff1ba3a5b4f&icid=autos\\_3632](http://editorial.autos.msn.com/blogs/autosblogpost-tru.aspx?post=c30a04d9-d292-4ded-a9bb-eff1ba3a5b4f&icid=autos_3632))

(The \$40,000 Quadski, a combination ATV and personal watercraft, goes 45 mph on land and at sea.)



[20121017-13](#) 22:25 Ben Re: Amphibia (reply to SteveB, above)

OK, now that is cool. It doesn't look like something you could drive on a vacation, nor take even a small family, or your wife and a dog both, along. But it looks 'way fun, and they may have got the market research right. The folks who own and use Amphicars these days are a tiny few island commuters, maybe a slightly larger number in regions with canals, and by far the most are weekend fun. This looks good for those applications. It's even a decent layout for fishing,

The Amphicar can manage 70.

That's an unusual view of a Schwimmwagen. You can see "The Thing" in it, for sure.





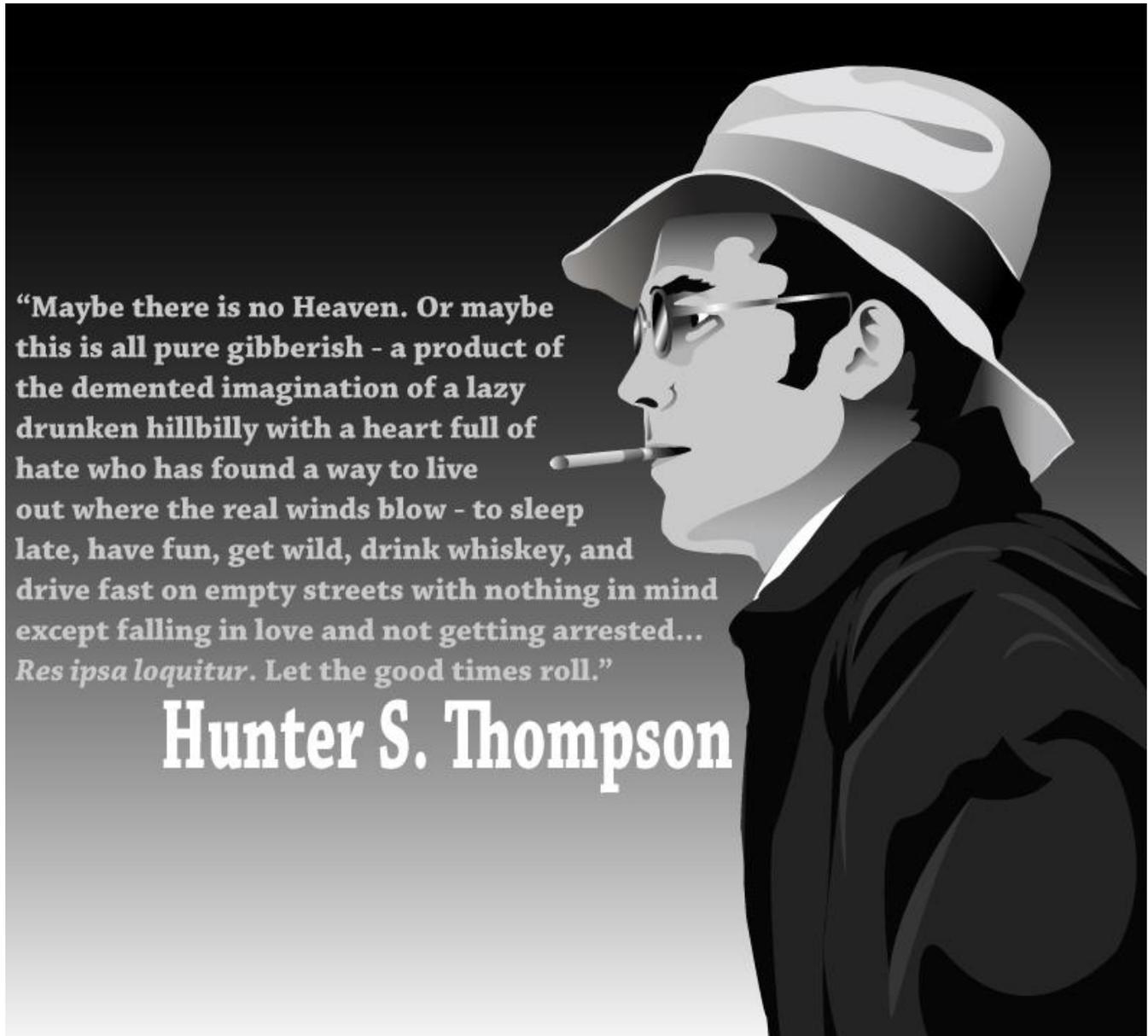
"Every GOP administration since 1952 has let the Military-Industrial Complex loot the Treasury and plunge the nation into debt on the excuse of a wartime economic emergency. Richard Nixon comes quickly to mind, along with Ronald Reagan and his ridiculous 'trickle-down' theory of U.S. economic policy. If the Rich get Richer, the theory goes, before long their pots will overflow and somehow 'trickle down' to the poor, who would rather eat scraps off the Bush family plates than eat nothing at all. Republicans have never approved of democracy, and they never will. It goes back to preindustrial America, when only white male property owners could vote."

**Hunter S. Thompson**

[www.facebook.com/WeLoveToIrritateHatefulRepublicans](http://www.facebook.com/WeLoveToIrritateHatefulRepublicans)

[http://www.goodreads.com/author/show/5237.Hunter\\_S\\_Thompson](http://www.goodreads.com/author/show/5237.Hunter_S_Thompson)

"I hate to advocate drugs, alcohol, violence, or insanity to anyone, but they've always worked for me." —Hunter S. Thompson



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

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Your email address will always be kept strictly confidential.

Feel free to forward this Newsletter to anyone you know on the Right or the Left, though your motives might be different in each case. Regardless, PASS IT ON! Help keep your friends and acquaintances informed and thinking.

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# FRIENDS OF THE MIDDLE NEWSLETTER #251 — OCT. 19, 2012

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

**INDEX: Click here.**

## **The Search for Truth and Certainty**

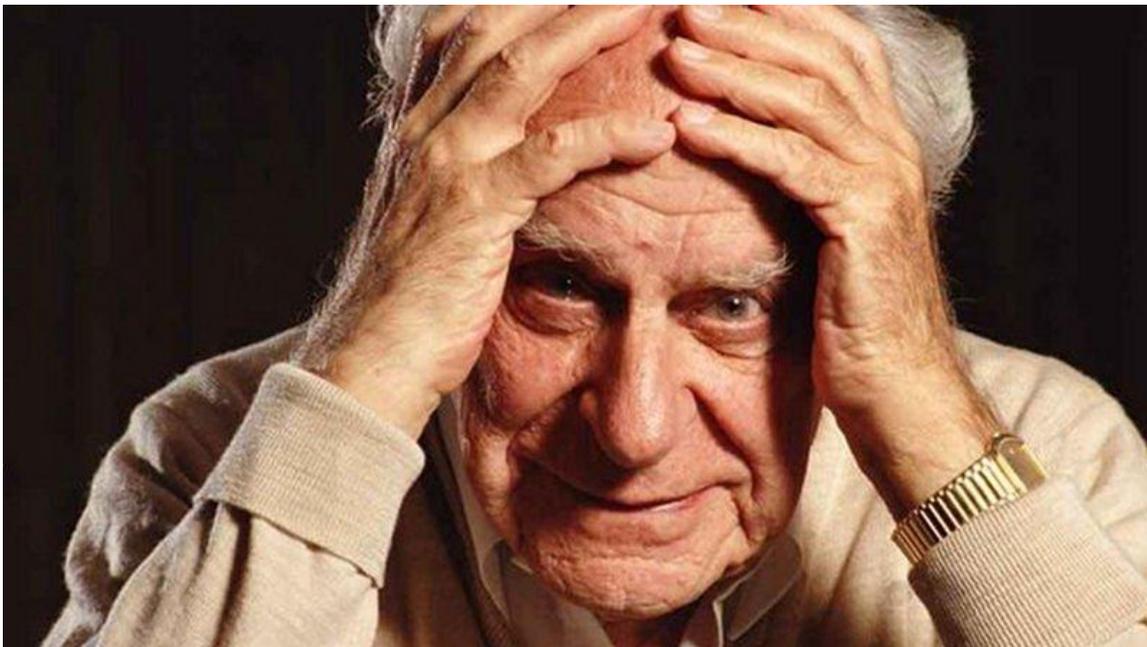
(posted by Steven W. Baker / SteveB, Oct. 19, 2012)

You never can be too sure, can you?

"Karl Popper, the Enemy of Certainty" by Liz Williams, *The Guardian*

[Sept. 10, 2012, (<http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2012/sep/10/karl-popper-enemy-uncertainty>)

(The effects of Karl Popper's work are still being felt today both within and beyond the philosophy of science.)



Philosopher Sir Karl Popper (1902-1994) at his home in Croydon, London, August 31 1992.  
Photograph: David Levenson/Getty Images

You might ask why we should care what an Austrian philosopher of science who has been dead for 18 years thought about the nature of scientific inquiry. Yet much of what Karl Popper contributed to the philosophy of science has now passed into mainstream thought, into the currency of that nebulous, tricky ontology known as "common sense". In the case of philosophers such as Popper, their work is, in a sense, too recent to be able to

evaluate with the level of hindsight that we might apply to more distant thinkers, such as David Hume, and yet it is worth attempting to unpack.

Born in 1902, in Vienna, the young Popper demonstrated a broad range of interests (music was a dominant passion) and an inquiring mind: he entered into the intellectual hotbed of Austrian culture, attending lectures by Einstein, investigating the psychotherapeutic theories of Freud and Adler, and becoming a Marxist. He decided at the age of 17 that the latter ideology was unsustainable, in large part as a result of an incident during his brief time in the Austrian Communist party, in which eight of Popper's friends were shot by the police in a riot instigated by the party in 1919. When Popper, somewhat naturally, complained to party leaders about this, he was told that loss of life was inevitable in the runup to revolution: Popper disagreed, and this sparked his lifelong commitment to political moderation, tolerance and liberalism.

The search for truth was, Popper considered, the strongest motivation for scientific discovery. His role was to determine how we can ascribe truth to the claims made by science, religion and politics. He did not, however, become a member of the Vienna Circle, that group of intellectuals who, following on from the work of Wittgenstein (the Tractatus mark-one version of that philosopher) aimed at the unification of the sciences and the wholesale rejection of metaphysics. Popper's antipathy to Wittgenstein meant that he was not invited to become a member of this particular group, but being cast in the role of the formal opposition seems to have honed his own thinking on logical positivism. Following on from Hume and the latter's rejection of induction, Popper took a stand against an empiricist view of science, endeavouring to show via his rejection of verificationism, and consequent espousal of falsificationism, how scientific theories progress. We will be looking at this more closely in future articles, but the fundamental principle of falsificationism is this: any contradictory instance to a theory is sufficient to falsify that theory, regardless of how many positive examples appear to support it.

Attempts to present theories such as Marxism, Adlerian psychology and astrology as scientific are subjected by Popper to his own analysis of falsificationism, and fail the test. It is perhaps worth noting that Popper's own doctorate was in psychology, attained in 1928.

Popper's work, therefore, was fuelled by a number of engines: a disillusionment with Marxism, the increase of Austrian fascism, which led to his move to New Zealand in 1937 and then London in 1946, and a distaste for the psychological models of the day. Popper's concerns over attempts to present psychology as a science, in contrast to the approach demonstrated by physicists such as Einstein, provide the groundwork to his work on falsifiability. Einstein's physics, which Popper regarded as somewhat unstable, nonetheless contains the parameters for its own falsifiability: we can say what it would take to render the theory false. This, Popper pointed out, was not the same for psychological theories, which are unfalsifiable in *principia*. The bulk of Popper's work in this particular area was done in the 1930s, in *The Logic of Scientific Discovery*.

During his time in New Zealand, Popper wrote his principal political tract, *The Open Society and Its Enemies*, a two-volume work in which both Plato and Marx come under fire. He criticised historicist analyses, in which society proceeds according to fixed and predictable political laws, and claimed that such analyses formed the basis for both ancient and modern totalitarianism. Epistemology is directly linked to politics within Popper's work: certainty forms the basis for totalitarian thought, and yet it is a certainty that is baseless if considered scientifically.

Popper died in 1994, having influenced the course of the philosophy of science throughout the 20th century. He remains one of the most significant commentators within the discipline, and the effects of his work are still being felt today both within and beyond the philosophy of science, connecting as they do epistemology, politics, and the scientific method.

When it comes to logical positivist analyses of the scientific method, Popper takes a metaphorical axe and hacks away at the roots: his critique of positivism is essentially a critique of induction itself.

Positivism stems from the work of the Vienna Circle, of Neurath, Carnap and Reichenbach, among others. It holds that the scientific method is based on verification, i.e. that a statement is only meaningful if it can be empirically verified or if it is analytic (the truths of mathematics and logic).

Empirical verification comes from induction. We seem to be pattern-matching creatures - when we have a theory, we cleave tightly to it. We go to considerable lengths to seek confirmatory instances of it. Unless we are scientists, and properly rigorous, we typically discount, explain away, reject falsifying examples. Yet following Hume's much earlier critique of this methodology, Popper maintains that inductive logic is inherently flawed: just because the sun has risen every day until now does not necessarily entail that it will rise again tomorrow. One instance of the sun's failure to rise will falsify the theory that "the sun always rises".

The scientist should reject theories when they are falsified. For instance, Einstein's theories generate hypothetical consequences which, if shown to be false, would falsify the entire theoretical structure on which they rest. Psychological theories, however, in their attempt to explain all forms of human behaviour, can continually be shored up by subsidiary hypotheses. Exceptions can always be found. On a Popperian model, psychology resembles magical thinking: if an expected result does not manifest, explanations can be found which explain that failure away, and thus the core theory remains intact. This, Popper considered, is a weak point – the theory cannot be properly tested if it is inherently unfalsifiable.

Popper gives the example of a man who saves a child from drowning, and another who lets the child succumb. Both can be explained in Adlerian terms: the first has sublimated his negative urges, and the second is still suffering from feelings of inferiority, and cannot. But if the theory cannot be disproved, is it therefore scientific? Popper argues that it is not.

I could not think of any human behaviour which could not be interpreted in terms of either theory. It was precisely this fact – that they always fitted, that they were always confirmed – which in the eyes of their admirers constituted the strongest argument in favour of these theories. It began to dawn on me that this apparent strength was in fact their weakness.

He goes on to say that:

Once your eyes were thus opened you saw confirmed instances everywhere: the world was full of verifications of the theory. Whatever happened always confirmed it. Thus its truth appeared manifest; and unbelievers were clearly people who did not want to see the manifest truth; who refuse to see it, either because it was against their class interest, or because of their repressions which were still "un-analyzed" and crying aloud for treatment.

To Popper, therefore, exceptions immediately falsify a theory, whereas confirmatory instances are just references to experience and thus possess no inherent logical merit. Falsification should thus replace induction as a core focus of the scientific method.

This is not to say that Popper believes that the pseudo-sciences, such as psychology are invariably wrong: they may hit on truths by accident, they may simply be insufficiently rigorous at present, yet are proceeding towards rigour, or they may explain things in a way that is not scientific. They may undoubtedly be interesting. With regard to the psychological theories of Freud and Adler, Popper himself remarked:

I personally do not doubt that much of what they say is of considerable importance.

All that Popper is claiming is that the underlying theories are not sciences, although they may one day play a role within a scientific paradigm, a view which seems to have enraged those who want to claim scientific status for sociology, for example.

Irrefutability is, Popper insists, a vice rather than a virtue. We should be looking at theories that are confirmed by *risky predictions*: those predictions which should have led to an instance that disconfirms the theory. Destructive testing is the only really viable scientific test: we should always aim at refutation, not confirmation, for confirmation is too easy and too weak.

Attempts to present political systems as scientific are increasingly regarded as old-fashioned: the "common sense" view suggests that politics is not scientific, cannot be reduced to a set of principles such that it can be applied

across cultures and societies. Yet to an extent, this "common sense" view derives from the work of Karl Popper, from that early attempt by the latter to tackle claims of Marxism's "scientific" basis. Popper's harsher critics have claimed that it is only because his attention was turned to Marxism that he himself attracted further notice at all, but I would dispute this. I consider that Popper's critique of logical positivism is a devastating one; he would have had a place in the philosophy of science even without the critique of contemporary political philosophies.

That critique emerges out of Popper's rejection of verificationism and his espousal of falsificationism. Perhaps ironically, Popper was himself a teenage Marxist, attracted by the apparent explanatory power of the ideology. Yet, with a remarkable degree of insight, fuelled by tragic personal experience, he soon realised that this explanatory power was itself an illusion – a weakness of the ideology, rather than a strength, and it was this insight (derived ultimately from the much earlier work of Hume) that provided the driving force behind his own critique of verificationism, both within Marxism and beyond it. By the time he was 17, Popper said, he had realised that:

I had accepted a dangerous creed uncritically, dogmatically... Once I had looked at it critically, the gaps and loopholes and inconsistencies in the Marxist theory became obvious...

Marxism, Popper claims, is analogous to the psychological theories of Adler and pseudo-sciences such as astrology. His attack upon the ideology became two-pronged: Marxism principally consisted of unfalsifiable claims, and it was a historicism. It could not, therefore, be described as scientific.

I found that those of my friends who were admirers of Marx, Freud, and Adler, were impressed by a number of points common to these theories, and especially by their apparent explanatory power. These theories appear to be able to explain practically everything that happened within the fields to which they referred... There was no conceivable human behavior which could contradict them.

What do we mean by "scientific", in this instance? Marx claimed that his system of political thought was predictive and, to an extent, this was the case. Yet Marxists did not follow the strict Popperian criterion of falsification: when predictions were not in fact borne out (for example, the failure of working class revolution to occur throughout European societies), the underlying theory was not rejected, but was salvaged by the use of ad hoc hypotheses which were deployed to shore the theory up – a classic symptom of a pseudo-science, according to Popper. Initially an attempt at scientific rigour, Marxism collapses back into the mire.

It's obviously possible to take issue with this on a number of counts: Wollheim, Cornforth and Hudelson all did so, among others, concentrating primarily on the accusations of historicism. One could also argue that Popper's critique of Marxism applies principally to efforts to defend the ideology on scientific grounds. There are plenty of Marxists out there who take a different view of predictability and the capacity for explanation and analysis. Popper's critique of verificationism is primarily to challenge claims of scientific status; it does not necessarily state that the theory should be thrown out entirely.

Other commentators (Verikukis, for instance) seek to challenge Popper on his home turf, claiming that he exhibits a double standard – a higher bar for Marxism, and a lower bar for his own attempts to devise a social science. Verikukis argues that the charges of unfalsifiability against Marxism have rarely been addressed, except in the wider arena of debunking the criterion of falsifiability itself (get rid of that, and the anti-Marxist critique collapses like a house of cards, requiring a complete refit elsewhere). This is the approach taken by Kuhn, Feyerabend and Lakatos – none of them Marxists – which we will consider on another occasion.

But it isn't just Marx who comes under fire in Popper's two-volume work, *The Open Society and Its Enemies*. Modern totalitarians are compared with ancient ones, namely, Plato: an early proponent, so Popper claims, of utopian social engineering. Given the nature of the society in *The Republic*, and its reliance upon a kind of early eugenics, I find it difficult to disagree with much of Popper's analysis. The utopian engineer, according to Popper, formulates laws about social development and prescribes action accordingly: both Plato and Marx fall into this historicist guise.

The history of the philosophy of science throughout the 20th century is marked by sporadic reactions to Karl Popper, breaking out into florid and controversial display and effectively governing the course of the discipline as

the century winds to its close. Popper's most significant critics during this period were the trio of Imre Lakatos, Thomas Kuhn and Paul Feyerabend – very different thinkers who, nonetheless, in their response to the theory of falsification, served to drive the philosophy of science forwards in leaps and bounds.

A central difficulty of falsification is behavioural rather than theoretical – falsificationism is an ideal. Scientists do not, in practice, jettison theories in response to a single falsificatory instance.

But what do they do instead? Generally they attempt to rescue their theory by dint of shoring it up with auxiliary hypotheses. Popper recognises this, referring to it as the "conventionalist stratagem". The problem with that stratagem is that, eventually, it destroys the theory's testability: astrology does this by refusing to countenance any negative instance; it renders itself unfalsifiable and therefore superficial. Many positive examples are invoked in support of the theory: it is based on inductive instances. But negative examples – of which there are many – are discounted as falsificatory instances by astrology's followers, and thus the theory chugs on, undeterred, yet increasingly weakened.

The precise manner in which scientists shore up their theories forms the basis of our trio's work. There are a number of reasons for the conventionalist stratagem, most of them obvious. If you've invested a great deal of time and money in the investigation of a particular scientific theory, you will, naturally, be loath to throw the theoretical baby out with the bathwater – especially if your work is funded by a much wider organisation, such as the government or the military.

These practical considerations aside, scientists get attached to theories – and this, too, is where the sociology of science comes in. Commentators vary on how far they believe that scientists' attachment to particular paradigms governs their thinking. In the pure realms of science, they're probably not supposed to get attached at all (theories aren't cats), but scientists are human, too, no matter how sniffy stringent rationalists might get about the issue.

Of the philosophers, as opposed to the sociologists, of science, it is probably Kuhn who has taken this view furthest: scientific paradigms, he claims, only really change when the old guard who promoted them either retire or expire. This is essentially a non-rational view of theory change, and has been open to some criticism as a result.

So how does Kuhn characterise the scientific method? Science, Kuhn claims, is formed of competing paradigms, one of which will usually be dominant in any given period. A scientific paradigm consists of a core theory surrounded by a number of auxiliary hypotheses. The core theory generally remains constant, whereas the auxiliary hypotheses are modified in the light of new or conflicting evidence.

Eventually, it may prove impossible to support the core theory by hypothesis modification any further, and at this point the core theory itself is abandoned or radically altered and a paradigm shift occurs. But this is an unusual event, going beyond what Kuhn refers to as "normal science": those often lengthy periods in which scientists try to hang on to their theories in the face of competing evidence. Popper's view is, Kuhn maintains, too idealistic.

Lakatos endeavours to reconcile the Popperian viewpoint with that of Kuhn: dispensing with the concept of the paradigm, he suggests that science moves forwards by means of the progressive research programme. Rather than invoking truth or falsity, we should consider whether a research programme – the hard core of hypotheses that constitute a theory – is progressing or degenerating. Does a theory predict new facts? Does it grow? If so, we may say that it is progressing. Lakatos's views form a halfway house between Kuhn and Popper (he was a student of the latter), and his approach is often considered to be a more nuanced form of falsificationism.

A more anarchic approach – literally – is offered by Feyerabend. Auxiliary hypotheses are critical, he argues, but may be irrational. In fact, it's impossible to develop any set of methodological rules by which scientists work: ad hoc, rule-breaking postulates are the order of the day. We seem to be heading at full speed towards epistemological relativism here, and indeed, according to Feyerabend, this is the case: not only does science fail to proceed according to fixed principles, but it doesn't deserve its epistemic privileges, either. Far out! So if your preference is for Feyerabend over Popper, astrologers might be on to something, after all.

Karl Popper died in 1994. As I remarked in the initial article in this series, his thought is, in many ways, too close for us to be able to evaluate with the full benefit of hindsight. But what would Popper make of the new(ish) millennium? It is hard not to believe that he would be cast into despair. Knowledge claims (and, more than that, certainty claims) are being made not only throughout political and religious ideologies, but also within alternative therapies, 2012 cults, revisionist approaches to history and a host of other fields.

Let's remind ourselves of Popper's actual take on this: he does not suggest that we reject these sorts of claims wholesale, but he does insist that we do not refer to them either in terms of epistemological certainty or in terms of science. They may, one day, achieve full falsifiable rigour, or they may not; they may be useful in other respects, or they may not, but we must be clear about their epistemological status.

So let us now take a step back and consider whether Popper has been successful in establishing falsificationism as the methodology du jour. Here, I think, we must acknowledge that he has not. Probabilistic induction remains the methodology of choice, not only among scientific practitioners, but also among those philosophers of science who take more moderate stances of other philosophers of science. Falsificationism also comes under fire from the scientific establishment itself, for instance, in the work of physicists Alan Sokal and Jean Bricmont, who state:

When a theory successfully withstands an attempt at falsification, a scientist will, quite naturally, consider the theory to be partially confirmed and will accord it a greater likelihood or a higher subjective probability... But Popper will have none of this: throughout his life he was a stubborn opponent of any idea of 'confirmation' of a theory, or even of its 'probability' ... [yet] the history of science teaches us that scientific theories come to be accepted above all because of their successes. (Sokal and Bricmont, 1997)

Both astrology and astronomy make incorrect predictions, Sokal and Bricmont argue, and falsificationism does not differentiate between them. But this claim is disputed by writers such as David Miller, who bring us full circle by pointing out that astronomy contains the parameters for its own falsifiability, whereas astrology does not.

What of Popper's political thought – that body of work so closely intertwined in Popper's writings with epistemology and scientific enquiry? His views on tolerance and anti-totalitarianism do now look like common sense to many. Political and social tolerance clearly leads to a paradox: summed up in the issue of where one person's fist ends and another's nose begins. Popper was a champion of liberalism throughout his life. He argues that tolerance means that we may eventually fail to tolerate intolerance. We can contain intolerant political philosophies, he says,

... as long as we can counter them by rational argument and keep them in check by public opinion.

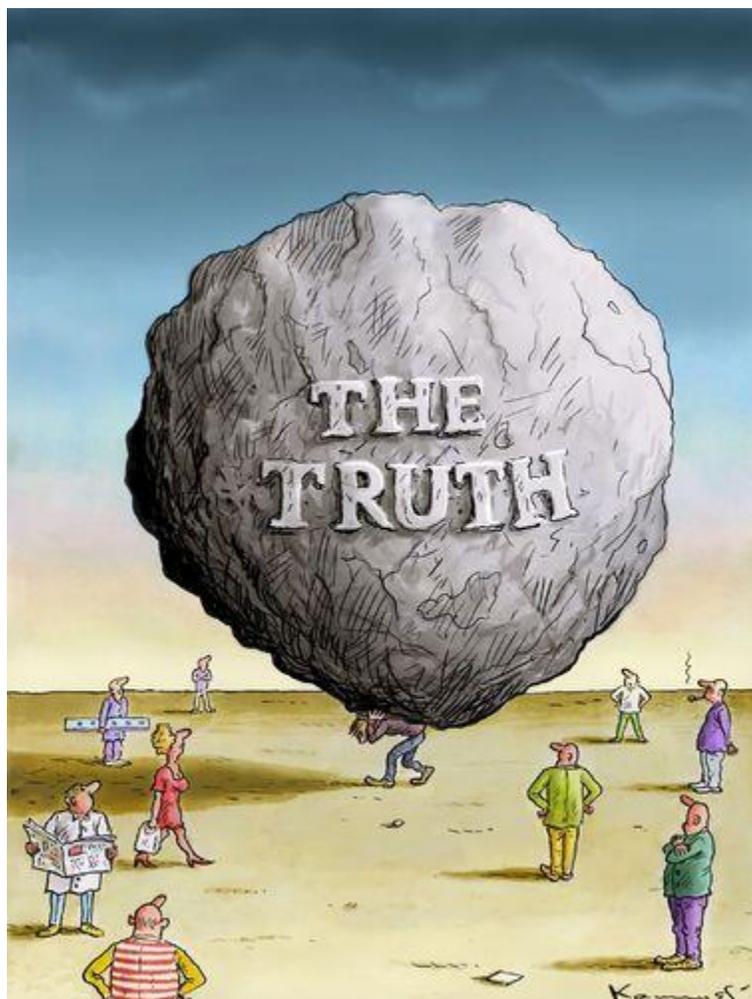
However:

We should therefore claim, in the name of tolerance, the right not to tolerate the intolerant. We should claim that any movement preaching intolerance places itself outside the law, and we should consider incitement to intolerance and persecution as criminal.

These are opinions which are highly relevant to today's relativistic, pluralistic societies, in which political and cultural boundary settings are still of necessity emergent, imprecise and fluid. Here, epistemological claims of certainty cannot be applied and Popper's early and tragic encounters with the results of those claims – on both sides of the political spectrum – surely informed his commitment to as great a degree of mutual tolerance as possible. Nor is this incompatible with his commitment to falsifiability as a standard for scientific rigour: fallibilism underlies both the knowledge claims of science and those of politics.

The old scientific ideal of episteme – of absolutely certain, demonstrable knowledge – has proved to be an idol. The demand for scientific objectivity makes it inevitable that every scientific statement must remain tentative for ever. It may be corroborated, but every corroboration is relative to other statements which, again, are tentative. Only in our subjective experiences of conviction, in our subjective faith can we be 'absolutely certain'.

The "craving to be right", that hostility to tolerance which is found throughout all human inquiry, is in Popper's eyes the basis for totalitarian thought; only once that is rejected can we get down to the business of testing truth claims, and only then can we be honest about what we do and do not know.





(USA Today)

Wow. Cold indeed. I see the future, and it looks bleak. I had a beer yesterday with an old friend who taught with me at UNCG. He's almost as pessimistic as I am about education and believes that in 20 years most universities will have closed. The expensive, private ones will carry on for the select few, but everything else, he believes, will be online. He's teaching an online course himself and has done for years. A real cynic. I tell myself that whatever the future looks like, the people living it will think it's just fine, an improvement even. I feel superannuated, which has its perks--like being retired and having time to "do my own thing."

My niece is an assistant principal at an elementary school in Indianapolis. She wrote a great piece on Facebook (Karen Loveless Linn) in response to something in the Indianapolis Star. It's a poignant plea for the right kind of attention to be paid to struggling schools. My second husband told me this story once: when he was in graduate school at Princeton, one of his classmates was having lots of trouble academically. He took a paper he'd written to his professor, a most eminent scholar, and listened to what the old man had to say. His response: "I don't need criticism; I need HELP!" Another friend, who is teaching at UNCG now and has quite a ways to go before he can even think about retiring, said on Facebook yesterday, "It's time to either dust off my resume or retreat to the scholar's cave." There's trouble in River City.

Once read a Sci Fi story about the future where everybody lived in single enclaves served by robots and only rarely ever interacted with other humans (a disgusting requirement for procreation and all that). At the time I thought pretty far fetched, now not so sure.

20121018-05 12:39 Pam Re: Photo: The Future of Education: How Cold! (reply to Art, above)

It's amazing how many things that happen in science fiction turn up later in reality, perhaps in a slightly different form. We laughed at Dick Tracy's watch. Who's laughing now?

20121018-02 09:37 Art R0mney's Tax Plan

Finally, details on the Romney tax plan to offset his tax reductions.

<http://www.romneytaxplan.com/>



20121018-06 16:04 Ben Photo: Today's Seafood Lunch at Apple

Today I enjoyed not only a lovely lunch, but a chance to see how an iPhone 4s camera (temporarily in my possession for replicating customer issues) affects the quality of my lunchtime photography. We'll let you be the judges over the next few days while I have it.

Lunch Today was the Far East line's excellent implementation of Shrimp Satay over rice noodles with satay sauce (peanuts with chilis), with generous dollops of carrot shreds, peanut chunks, onion (in the sauce), pickled ginger (gari), a clump of jalapeno slices, and a garnish of pickled kale stem.

Zing! These flavors worked great with each other. The zesty jalapenos were an unsubtle accent to the chilis in the satay sauce; the small plump uber-fresh peeled Gulf shrimp mirrored the texture of the fine strands of rice noodle, which in their turn absorbed the flavors of the sauce very well. The pickled ginger and kale stem were a mouth-puckering offset, very tasty between bites. I am not a noodle guy by any stretch, but this was a delicious lunch.

Unable to resist Faith's charms for the entire week, I declared Dessert Day. My only dessert so far this week was her gorgeous Chocolate Bosc Tart with Grand Marnier chocolate ganache in a chocolate cake shell. It was decadent, and very, very fine indeed. (K., I can hear you panting...)

Lunch, as seen through an iPhone 4s:



Shrimp Satay over Rice Noodles

[20121018-07](#) 23:57 Bill Photos: Einstein Was Right #2

Get-together in a restaurant...



Enjoying the beauty of a museum...



Enjoying a day at the beach...





<http://www.flickr.com/photos/doneastwest/6101475081/>



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

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## FRIENDS OF THE MIDDLE NEWSLETTER #252 — OCT. 22, 2012

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### **'Where Do We Come From, Grandpa?'**

(posted by Steven W. Baker / SteveB, Oct. 22, 2012)

I know you don't really know what planet you've landed on, so to speak, my *bonita* little granddaughter, but you are already waking up and learning new things every day. In fact, that process has probably been going on for some time with you already, when you were still part of your mother. On Thursday afternoon, when you arrived here on Earth, that process exploded into your new babyhood. What you are is not so much a baby as a *learner*. I'm not exactly sure why you, in particular, are here, my dear child, but I believe you might as well make your purpose to



My wonderful, lovely daughter, Marissa, with my beautiful new granddaughter, Malaya!  
I can't wait to meet her!



And, in the interest of equal time...my other incredible daughter, Laurel,  
and her handsome, talented family.

learn and grow all you can. Then take what you have learned and try to make the world a better place, even if that part of the world you can affect is just yourself and those around you. I know you will follow in your mother's footsteps and succeed wonderfully!

Someday, perhaps at *madrugada*, when you see the *lucero* hanging low on the brightening horizon like a pearl somehow illuminated yet dying, you will wonder and contemplate, as have I and as have we all, where you came from and what you believe, especially about God, because, whether God exists or not, that is where all things begin.

If, at that time, you were to ask me what I think, I would have to say, "No one really knows what to believe, in the true sense of the word." But that doesn't mean mankind and womankind haven't spent an enormous amount of time and energy on the subject. The articles which follow are just one small illustration of that.

For what it's worth, I want to tell you where I have come to stand on these issues and why. I'm going to keep it simple...much simpler than the following articles, because I'm just a simple man, and I don't want to waste your time. Plus, I only have a couple of hours to write this before I have to walk the four blocks down the street to help open the Cookie Factory.

First, don't believe anything I say about God. Don't believe anything anyone says about God! You must look into your own heart, because only there will you find the answer for you. After you learn all you can, after you find out who you are, then you will discover your own truth about things like God. Don't believe the charlatans.

I am burdened by, or enlightened by, certain assumptions. I believe that it is best to assume that life, that one's own life, has a purpose. At the very least, that purpose is to create as much more good than evil as possible, however those terms are defined, because this is where true human happiness lies, this is how we are fulfilled. Anything else is the definition of insanity and sociopathy.

Also, I don't put much stock in the particulars of any organized religion. And I guess I should also tell you that I have come to the point of disbelief in the God of my youth. If there is, in some sense, a God, then I think he/she must be much more incomprehensible and distant than anything I have ever been able to imagine. And in all the particulars I have looked into, they seem to me to be full of the mind and agendas of men—from way before the Greeks through the Mormons and Scientologists.

One other important assumption, though I tend to be a materialist, is that we can't really know if the physical world we experience is "real". Modern physicists admit that even lead is mainly empty space and that lead, itself, is impossible to actually see (all we can see is light). They also tend to think there may be other, hidden dimensions which permeate the three we know, though none of them knows what time is. A universe, as we know it, could much more easily be constructed of information than of particles and atoms and energy. We could be computer programs, though I wonder if that "illusion" of being on the inside—sentient, conscious, and looking out.—could be created in software. If not, maybe that's why a physical universe exists.

Stripped of particulars, the search for God becomes philosophical—metaphysical, aesthetic, and ethical.

Stand with me now, your video camera at the ready, in the time and place we think does not "exist", i.e. before the Big Bang. The physicists and philosophers and the believers in magic with their agendas all have their theories and arguments (see the articles below), but no one really knows. Either God was there to do whatever he/she did, or there was some unknown naturalistic process that can create a universe out of "nothing". Surely, there would, at least, be a helluva lot of energy or information involved! Regardless, you can easily have it either way, so point your camera at God if you so choose and if you can find him/her.

What does this creator-of-universes, cosmic God look like? Remember, he's really, really out there, standing as he is somewhere before the Big Bang or whatever Bang came first in whatever dimension or membrane or multiverse. God can't be the wise, patient, loving old man with a white beard shepherding his flock on our humble planet. He/She is much more alien than that, yet can't simply be an "alien" for that can't be "God". God would have to be more like a metaphysical "presence" with an unknowable mind and purpose. A force of nature, much like the ocean, much like the energy that drives time, the atom, the stars, and the movement of the stars. A mystery equal to "something from nothing". Not some needy, vengeful king with a white beard, robes, and a big-ass book.

I found the God of my childhood to be comforting. A guide I could talk to. For me, that God is no longer possible, despite some spiritual dimension of the universe which I seem to somehow sense, but which might just be dark energy or the vibrations of atoms or a sense of the hidden dimensions. I don't much trust impressions or emotions as arbiters or even harbingers of truth.

But, take your pick. I don't see much difference between the two, God or nature, though I will say that I miss my old friend, and especially the fantasy of someday being reunited with him/her, my parents, my dear son, and, someday, even with you, sweet Malaya. Yet such is the reality of realism and materialism.

Now, let's say you're going to end up believing in God. OK, fine. Now, if you then say you want to believe in some specific manifestation of the mystical on Earth, then I have to tell you that might be a problem. How is one to ever know which manifestation, if any, is real? Is any one thing really a manifestation of God—not nature, or the Devil, or an angel, or aliens from another dimension, or man, or oneself? I think you see the problem.

Where does one begin and end in one's beliefs? If the Bible is a manifestation of God, what about the predictions of fortune tellers, the miracle cure in front of the Virgin of Cotoca, the miracle of life, the Bhagavad Gita, the Koran, the Book of Mormon, or magic itself? Tread carefully on this ground, my dear granddaughter. Read history, look at your neighbors to see the human suffering that has resulted from convictions based on the comparative worthlessness of this life when compared to the alleged "afterlife".

Even if you decide to be not just spiritual, but religious, even if you believe every word of the Bible is the literal truth from God's own "lips"—know that it's all part of the great unknown and unknowable. Only you can decide what is true for you. Most others have agendas not to be completely trusted.

Further, I think we should strive to be "good", but not to get to "heaven". We should be good and fight evil to help create a world that is better for us, those we love, and those who will follow. It's as simple as that. But making this a better world is different than striving to get into "heaven". Rarely, for instance, does the mystical end justify a terrible means because, for the "non-believer", the means and end both exist in this world, not some other—spread across heaven, earth, and hell, for instance.

The article and book reviews which follow don't necessarily reflect my views, but they do indicate the necessary subject matter one has to consider to arrive at considered judgments. They serve, I think, to sort of bring up the subject and, perhaps, to open some doors or windows, as the case may be.

Yes, I miss my judgmental old friend with the beard and the promises. Though I prefer to go it alone, in the world my generation is leaving behind, guided much of the way by men of religion, you might find God to be a valuable friend, just as I once did.

May your life be full of peace, love, truth, and good, my little angel, Malaya.

"Theistic Critiques of Atheism" by William Lane Craig, Reasonable Faith

2007, (<http://www.reasonablefaith.org/theistic-critiques-of-atheism>)

(An account of the resurgence of philosophical theism in our time, including a brief survey of prominent anti-theistic arguments such as the presumption of atheism, the incoherence of theism, and the problem of evil, along with a defense of theistic arguments like the contingency argument, the cosmological argument, the teleological argument, and the moral argument.)

The last half-century has witnessed a veritable revolution in Anglo-American philosophy. In a recent retrospective, the eminent Princeton philosopher Paul Benacerraf recalls what it was like doing philosophy at Princeton during the 1950s and '60s. The overwhelmingly dominant mode of thinking was scientific naturalism. Metaphysics had been vanquished, expelled from philosophy like an unclean leper. Any problem that could not be addressed by science was simply dismissed as a pseudo-problem. Verificationism reigned triumphantly over the emerging science of philosophy. "This new enlightenment would put the old metaphysical views and attitudes to rest and replace them with the new mode of doing philosophy."<sup>1</sup>

The collapse of Verificationism was undoubtedly the most important philosophical event of the twentieth century. Its demise meant a resurgence of metaphysics, along with other traditional problems of philosophy which Verificationism had suppressed. Accompanying this resurgence has come something new and altogether unanticipated: a renaissance in Christian philosophy.

The face of Anglo-American philosophy has been transformed as a result. Theism is on the rise; atheism is on the decline.<sup>2</sup> Atheism, though perhaps still the dominant viewpoint at the American university, is a philosophy in retreat. In a recent article in the secularist journal *Philo*, Quentin Smith laments what he calls "the desecularization of academia that evolved in philosophy departments since the late 1960s." He complains:

Naturalists passively watched as realist versions of theism...began to sweep through the philosophical community, until today perhaps one-quarter or one-third of philosophy professors are theists, with most being orthodox Christians...in philosophy, it became, almost overnight, 'academically respectable' to argue for theism, making philosophy a favored field of entry for the most intelligent and talented theists entering academia today.<sup>3</sup>

Smith concludes, "God is not 'dead' in academia; he returned to life in the late 1960s and is now alive and well in his last academic stronghold, philosophy departments."<sup>4</sup>

As vanguards of a new philosophical paradigm, theistic philosophers have freely issued various critiques of atheism. In so short a space as this entry it is impossible to do little more than sketch some of them and to provide direction

for further reading. These critiques could be grouped under two basic heads: (1) There are no cogent arguments on behalf of atheism, and (2) There are cogent arguments on behalf of theism.

## No Cogent Arguments on Behalf of Atheism

### Presumption of Atheism

Theists have complained that the usual arguments against God's existence do not pass philosophical muster. One of the most commonly proffered justifications of atheism has been the so-called presumption of atheism. At face value, this is the claim that in the absence of evidence for the existence of God, we should presume that God does not exist. So understood, such an alleged presumption seems to conflate atheism with agnosticism. When one looks more closely at how protagonists of the presumption of atheism use the term "atheist," however, one discovers that they are sometimes re-defining the word to indicate merely the absence of belief in God. Such a re-definition trivializes the claim of the presumption of atheism, for on this definition atheism ceases to be a view, and even infants count as atheists. One would still require justification in order to know either that God exists or that He does not exist.

Other advocates of the presumption of atheism use the word in the standard way but insist that it is precisely the absence of evidence for theism that justifies their claim that God does not exist. The problem with such a position is captured neatly by the aphorism, beloved of forensic scientists, that "Absence of evidence is not evidence of absence." The absence of evidence is evidence of absence only in cases in which, were the postulated entity to exist, we should expect to have more evidence of its existence than we do. With respect to God's existence, it is incumbent on the atheist to prove that if God existed, He would provide more evidence of His existence than what we have. This is an enormously heavy burden of proof for the atheist to bear, for two reasons: (1) On at least Christian theism the primary way in which we come to know God is not through evidence but through the inner work of His Holy Spirit, which is effectual in bringing persons into relation with God wholly apart from evidence.<sup>5</sup> (2) On Christian theism God has provided the stupendous miracles of the creation of the universe from nothing and the resurrection of Jesus from the dead, for which events there is good scientific and historical evidence—not to mention all the other arguments of natural theology.<sup>6</sup> In this light, the presumption of atheism seems presumptuous, indeed!

The debate among contemporary philosophers has therefore moved beyond the facile presumption of atheism to a discussion of the so-called "Hiddenness of God" —in effect, a discussion of the probability or expectation that God, if He existed, would leave more evidence of His existence than what we have. Unsatisfied with the evidence we have, some atheists have argued that God, if He existed, would have prevented the world's unbelief by making His existence starkly apparent. But why should God want to do such a thing? On the Christian view it is actually a matter of relative indifference to God whether people believe that He exists or not. For what God is interested in is building a love relationship with us, not just getting us to believe that He exists. There is no reason at all to think that if God were to make His existence more manifest, more people would come into a saving relationship with Him. In fact, we have no way of knowing that in a world of free persons in which God's existence is as obvious as the nose on one's face that more people would come to love Him and know His salvation than in the actual world. But then the claim that if God existed, He would make His existence more evident than it is has little or no warrant, thereby undermining the claim that the absence of such evidence is itself positive evidence that God does not exist. Worse, if God is endowed with middle knowledge, so that He knows how any free person would act under any circumstances in which God might place him, then God can have so providentially ordered the actual world as to provide just those evidences and gifts of the Holy Spirit which He knew would be adequate for bringing those with an open heart and mind to saving faith. Thus, the evidence is as adequate as needs be.

### (In)coherence of Theism

One of the central concerns of contemporary Philosophy of Religion is the coherence of theism. During the previous generation the concept of God was often regarded as fertile ground for anti-theistic arguments. The difficulty with theism, it was said, was not merely that there are no good arguments for the existence of God, but, more fundamentally, that the notion of God is incoherent.

This anti-theistic critique has evoked a prodigious literature devoted to the philosophical analysis of the concept of God. Two controls have tended to guide this inquiry into the divine nature: Scripture and Perfect Being theology. For thinkers in the Judaeo-Christian tradition, the Anselmian conception of God as the greatest conceivable being or most perfect being has guided philosophical speculation on the raw data of Scripture, so that God's biblical attributes are to be conceived in ways that would serve to exalt God's greatness. Since the concept of God is underdetermined by the biblical data and since what constitutes a "great-making" property is to some degree debatable, philosophers working within the Judaeo-Christian tradition enjoy considerable latitude in formulating a philosophically coherent and biblically faithful doctrine of God. Theists thus find that anti-theistic critiques of certain conceptions of God can actually be quite helpful in formulating a more adequate conception.

For example, most Christian philosophers of religion today are quite happy to deny that God is simple or impassible or immutable in any unrestricted sense, even though medieval theologians affirmed such divine attributes, since these attributes are not ascribed to God in the Bible (and seem even to be incompatible with the biblical descriptions of God) and are not clearly great-making. Should it turn out that certain notions like omnipotence or omniscience are inherently paradoxical under certain definitions, that no being could have all powers, say, or know all truths, this conclusion, while of considerable academic interest, would in the end be of little theological significance, since what God cannot do or know on such accounts is so recondite that no incompatibility is thereby demonstrated with the God described in the Bible.

In fact, however, a coherent doctrine of God's attributes can be formulated. Take omnipotence, for example. This attribute stubbornly resisted adequate formulation until Flint and Freddoso's analysis published in 1983. A key insight into the concept of omnipotence is that it should be defined in terms of the ability to actualize certain states of affairs, rather than in terms of raw power. Thus, omnipotence should not be understood as power which is unlimited in its quantity or variety. If we understand omnipotence in terms of ability to actualize states of affairs, then it is no attenuation of God's omnipotence that He cannot make a stone too heavy for Him to lift, for, given that God is essentially omnipotent, "a stone too heavy for God to lift" describes as logically impossible a state of affairs as does "a square triangle" and thus describes nothing at all.

Shall we say, then, that an agent  $S$  is omnipotent if and only if  $S$  can actualize any state of affairs which is broadly logically possible? No, for certain states of affairs may be logically possible but due to the passage of time may no longer be possible to actualize. Let us call past states of affairs which are not indirectly actualizable by someone later in time the "hard" past. Shall we say, then, that an agent  $S$  is omnipotent at a time  $t$  if and only if  $S$  can at  $t$  actualize any state of affairs which is broadly logically possible for someone sharing the same hard past with  $S$  to actualize at  $t$ ? It seems not. For counterfactuals about free actions raise a further problem. One has control over counterfactuals about one's own free decisions but not over counterfactuals about the free decisions of others. That implies that an adequate definition of omnipotence cannot require  $S$  to be able to actualize states of affairs described by counterfactuals about the free decisions of other agents, for that would be to demand the logically impossible of  $S$ . Shall we say, then, that  $S$  is omnipotent at a time  $t$  if and only if  $S$  can at  $t$  actualize any state of affairs which is broadly logically possible for  $S$  to actualize, given the same hard past at  $t$  and the same true counterfactuals about free acts of others? This seems almost right. But it is open to the complaint that if  $S$  is essentially incapable of any particular action, no matter how trivial, than  $S$ 's inability to perform that action does not count against his omnipotence. Therefore we need to broaden the definition so as to require  $S$  to perform any action which any agent in his situation could perform. The following analysis would seem satisfactory:  $S$  is omnipotent at a time  $t$  if and only if  $S$  can at  $t$  actualize any state of affairs which is not described by counterfactuals about the free acts of others and which is broadly logically possible for someone to actualize, given the same hard past at  $t$  and the same true counterfactuals about free acts of others. Such an analysis successfully sets the parameters of God's omnipotence without imposing any non-logical limit on His power.

Or consider omniscience. On the standard account of omniscience, for any person  $S$ ,  $S$  is omniscient if and only if  $S$  knows every true proposition and believes no false proposition. On this account God's cognitive excellence is defined in terms of his propositional knowledge. Some persons have charged that omniscience so-defined is an inherently paradoxical notion, like the set of all truths. But the standard definition does not commit us to any sort of totality of all truths but merely to universal quantification with respect to truths: God knows every truth. Moreover, the standard definition does not purport to give us the mode of God's knowledge but merely its *scope* and *accuracy*. Christian theologians have not typically thought of God's knowledge as propositional in nature but as an undivided intuition of reality, which we finite knowers *represent* to ourselves in terms of propositions. We express

propositionally what God knows non-propositionally. On this view there do not actually exist an infinite number of propositions, but only as many propositions as human beings have cognized. Indeed, if one is a fictionalist with respect to abstract objects like propositions, then propositions are just useful fictions which we employ to describe people's belief states, and the ground is swept from beneath any objections formulated on the basis of Platonistic assumptions concerning the reality of propositions. Finally, adequate definitions of divine omniscience are possible which make no mention of propositions at all. Charles Taliaferro proposes, for example, that omniscience be understood in terms of maximal cognitive power, to wit, a person *S* is omniscient if it is metaphysically impossible for there to be a being with greater cognitive power than *S* and this power is fully exercised.

Thus, far from undermining theism, the anti-theistic critiques of theism's coherence have served mainly to refine and strengthen theistic belief.

### Problem of Evil

Undoubtedly the greatest obstacle to belief in God is the so-called problem of evil. During the last quarter century or so, an enormous amount of philosophical analysis has been poured into this problem, with the result that genuine philosophical progress on the age-old question has been made.

Most broadly speaking, we must distinguish between the intellectual problem of evil and the emotional problem of evil. The intellectual problem of evil concerns how to give a rational explanation of the co-existence of God and evil. The emotional problem of evil concerns how to comfort those who are suffering and how to dissolve the emotional dislike people have of a God who would permit such evil.

Contemporary thinkers recognize that there are significantly different versions of the intellectual problem of evil and have assigned various labels to them, such as "deductive," "inductive," "logical," "probabilistic," "evidential," and so on. It may be most helpful to distinguish two ways in which the intellectual problem of evil may be cast, either as an internal problem or as an external problem. That is to say, the problem may be presented in terms of premises to which the theist is or ought to be committed as a theist, so that the theistic worldview is somehow at odds with itself, or it may be presented in terms of premises to which the theist is not committed as a theist but which we nonetheless have good reason to regard as true.

It is worth noting that traditionally atheists have presented the problem of evil as an internal problem for theism. That is, atheists have claimed that the following statements are either logically inconsistent or improbable with respect to each other:

A. An omnipotent, omnibenevolent God exists.

and

B. The quantity and kinds of suffering in the world exist.

As a result of the work of Christian philosophers like Alvin Plantinga, it is today widely recognized that the internal problem of evil is a failure as an argument for atheism. No one has ever been able to show that (A) and (B) are either logically incompatible with each other or improbable with respect to each other.

Having abandoned the internal problem, atheists have very recently taken to advocating the external problem, often called the evidential problem of evil. If we take God to be essentially omnipotent and omnibenevolent and call suffering which is not necessary to achieve some adequately compensating good "gratuitous evil," the argument can be simply summarized:

1. If God exists, gratuitous evil does not exist.
2. Gratuitous evil exists.
3. Therefore, God does not exist.

What makes this an external problem is that the theist is not committed by his worldview to the truth of (2). The Christian theist is committed to the truth that *Evil exists*, but not that *Gratuitous evil exists*. Thus the atheist claims that the apparently pointless and unnecessary suffering in the world constitutes *evidence* against God's existence.

Now the most controversial premise in this argument is (2). Everybody admits that the world is filled with *apparently* gratuitous suffering. But that does not imply that these apparently gratuitous evils really *are* gratuitous. There are at least three reasons why the inference from apparently gratuitous evil to genuinely gratuitous evil is tenuous.

1. *We are not in a good position to assess with confidence the probability that God lacks morally sufficient reasons for permitting the suffering in the world.* Whether God's existence is improbable relative to the evil in the world depends on how probable it is that God has morally sufficient reasons for permitting the evil that occurs. What makes the probability here so difficult to assess is that we are not in a good epistemic position to make these kinds of probability judgements with any sort of confidence. Only an omniscient mind could grasp the complexities of providentially directing a world of free creatures toward one's pre-vised goals. One has only to think of the innumerable, incalculable contingencies involved in arriving at a single historical event, say, the enactment of the Lend-Lease policy by the American Congress prior to the United States' entry into World War II. We have no idea of the natural and moral evils that might be involved in order for God to arrange the circumstances and free agents in them requisite to such an event. Certainly many evils seem pointless and unnecessary to us—but we are simply not in a position to judge. To say this is not to appeal to mystery, but rather to point to the inherent cognitive limitations that frustrate attempts to say that it is improbable that God has a morally sufficient reason for permitting some particular evil.

Ironically, in other contexts atheists recognize these cognitive limitations. One of the most damaging objections to utilitarian ethical theory, for example, is that it is quite simply impossible for us to estimate which action that we might perform will ultimately lead to the greatest amount of happiness or pleasure in the world. Because of our cognitive limitations, actions which appear disastrous in the short term may redound to the greatest good, while some short term boon may issue in untold misery. Once we contemplate God's providence over the whole of history, then it becomes evident how hopeless it is for limited observers to speculate on the probability that some evil we see is ultimately gratuitous. Our failure to discern the morally justifying reason for the occurrence of various evils gives very little ground for thinking that God—especially a God equipped with middle knowledge—does not have morally sufficient reasons for permitting the evils we observe in the world.

2. *Christian theism entails doctrines that increase the probability of the co-existence of God and evil.* The atheist maintains that if God exists, then it is improbable that the world would contain the evils it does. Now what the Christian theist can do in response to such an assertion is to offer various hypotheses that would tend to raise the probability of evil given God's existence:  $\text{Pr}(\text{Evil}/\text{God}\&\text{Hypotheses}) > \text{Pr}(\text{Evil}/\text{God})$ . The Christian can try to show that if God exists and these hypotheses are true, then it is not so surprising that evil exists. This in turn reduces any improbability which evil might be thought to throw upon God. These hypotheses are various Christian doctrines, so that the Christian's claim is that the observed evil in the world is more probable on Christian theism than it is on mere theism (or, alternatively, that these doctrines should lead us to revise upward  $\text{Pr}(\text{Evil}/\text{God})$  in light of the realization that  $\text{Pr}(\text{Evil}/\text{Christian God})$  is not so low after all). Four Christian doctrines come to mind in this connection.

First, the chief purpose of life is not happiness, but the knowledge of God. One reason that the problem of evil seems so intractable is that people tend naturally to assume that if God exists, then His purpose for human life is happiness in this world. God's role is to provide a comfortable environment for His human pets. But on the Christian view, this is false. We are not God's pets, and the goal of human life is not happiness *per se*, but the knowledge of God—which in the end will bring true and everlasting human fulfillment. Many evils occur in life which may be utterly pointless with respect to the goal of producing human happiness; but they may not be pointless with respect to producing a deeper, saving knowledge of God. To carry his argument, the atheist must show that it is feasible for God to create a world in which the same amount of the knowledge of God is achieved, but with less evil—which is sheer speculation.

Second, mankind has been accorded significant moral freedom to rebel against God and His purpose. Rather than submit to and worship God, people have freely rebelled against God and go their own way and so find themselves alienated from God, morally guilty before Him, and groping in spiritual darkness, pursuing false gods of their own making. The horrendous moral evils in the world are testimony to man's depravity in this state of spiritual alienation from God. The Christian is thus not surprised at the moral evil in the world; on the contrary he *expects* it.

Third, God's purpose spills over into eternal life. In the Christian view, this earthly life is but a momentary preparation for immortal life. In the afterlife God will give those who have trusted Him for salvation an eternal life of unspeakable joy. Given the prospect of eternal life, we should not expect to see in this life God's compensation for every evil we experience. Some may be justified only in light of eternity.

Fourth, the knowledge of God is an incommensurable good. To know God, the locus of infinite goodness and love, is an incomparable good, the fulfillment of human existence. The sufferings of this life cannot even be compared to it. Thus, the person who knows God, no matter what he suffers, no matter how awful his pain, can still truly say, "God is good to me!", simply in virtue of the fact that he knows God.

These four Christian doctrines increase the probability of the co-existence of God and the evils in the world. They thereby serve to decrease any improbability which these evils might seem to cast upon the existence of God. In order to sustain his argument the atheist will have to show that these doctrines are themselves improbable.

3. There is better warrant for believing that God exists than that the evil in the world is really gratuitous. It has been said that one man's *modus ponens* is another man's *modus tollens*. The atheist's own argument may thus be turned against him:

1. If God exists, gratuitous evil does not exist.

2\*. God exists.

3\*. Therefore, gratuitous evil does not exist.

Thus, if God exists, then the evil in the world is not really gratuitous.

So the issue comes down to which is true: (2) or (2\*)? In order to prove that God does not exist, atheists would have to show that (2) is significantly more probable than (2\*). As Daniel Howard-Snyder points out in his book *The Evidential Problem of Evil*, an argument from evil is a problem only for the person "who finds all its premises and inferences compelling and who has lousy grounds for believing theism."<sup>7</sup> But if one has better reasons for believing that God exists, then evil "is not a problem."<sup>8</sup> The Christian theist might maintain that when we take into account the full scope of the evidence, then the existence of God becomes quite probable, even if the problem of evil, taken in isolation, does make God's existence improbable.

### Cogent Arguments on Behalf of Theism

The renaissance of Christian philosophy over the last half century has been accompanied by a re-appreciation of the traditional arguments for the existence of God. Limitations of space permit mention of only four such arguments here.

#### Contingency Argument

A simple statement of the argument might run:

1. Anything that exists has an explanation of its existence (either in the necessity of its own nature or in an external cause).
2. If the universe has an explanation of its existence, that explanation is God.
3. The universe exists.
4. Therefore the explanation of the existence of the universe is God.

Premise (1) is a modest version of the Principle of Sufficient Reason. It circumvents the typical atheist objections to strong versions of that principle. For (1) merely requires any existing *thing* to have an explanation of its existence. This premise is compatible with there being brute facts about the world. What it precludes is that there could exist things which just exist inexplicably. This principle seems quite plausible, at least more so than its contradictory. One thinks of Richard Taylor's illustration of finding a translucent ball while walking in the woods. One would find the claim quite bizarre that the ball just exists inexplicably; and increasing the size of the ball, even until it becomes co-extensive with the cosmos, would do nothing to obviate the need for an explanation of its existence.

Premise (2) is, in effect, the contrapositive of the typical atheist retort that on the atheistic worldview the universe simply exists as a brute contingent thing. Moreover, (2) seems quite plausible in its own right. For if the universe, by definition, includes all of physical reality, then the cause of the universe must (at least causally prior to the universe's existence) transcend space and time and therefore cannot be temporal or material. But there are only two kinds of things that could fall under such a description: either an abstract object or else a mind. But abstract objects do not stand in causal relations. Therefore it follows that the explanation of the existence of the universe is an external, transcendent, personal cause—which is one meaning of "God."

Finally, (3) states the obvious, that there is a universe. It follows that God exists.

It is open to the atheist to retort that while the universe has an explanation of its existence, that explanation lies not in an external ground but in the necessity of its own nature; in other words, (2) is false. This is, however, an extremely bold suggestion which atheists have not been eager to embrace. We have, one can safely say, a strong intuition of the universe's contingency. A possible world in which no concrete objects exist certainly seems conceivable. We generally trust our modal intuitions on other familiar matters; if we are to do otherwise with respect to the universe's contingency, then the atheist needs to provide some reason for such skepticism other than his desire to avoid theism. Moreover, as we shall see below, we have good reason to think that the universe does not exist by a necessity of its own nature.

### Cosmological Argument

A simple version of this argument might go:

1. Whatever begins to exist has a cause.
2. The universe began to exist.
3. Therefore, the universe has a cause.

Conceptual analysis of what it means to be a cause of the universe then helps to establish some of the theologically significant properties of this being.

Premise (1) seems obviously true—at the least, more so than its negation. It is rooted in the metaphysical intuition that something cannot come into being from nothing. If things could really come into being uncaused out of nothing, then it becomes inexplicable why just anything and everything do not come into existence uncaused from nothing. Moreover, the conviction that an origin of the universe requires a causal explanation seems quite reasonable, for on the atheistic view, if the universe began at the Big Bang, there was not even the *potentiality* of the universe's existence prior to the Big Bang, since nothing is prior to the Big Bang. But then how could the universe become actual if there was not even the potentiality of its existence? It makes much more sense to say

that the potentiality of the universe lay in the power of God to create it. Finally, the first premise is constantly confirmed in our experience. Atheists who are scientific naturalists thus have the strongest of motivations to accept it.

Premise (2), the more controversial premise, may be supported by both deductive, philosophical arguments and inductive, scientific arguments. Classical proponents of the argument contended that an infinite temporal regress of events cannot exist, since the existence of an actually infinite, as opposed to merely potentially infinite, number of things leads to intolerable absurdities. The best way to support this claim is still by way of thought experiments, like the famous Hilbert's Hotel<sup>9</sup>, which illustrate the various absurdities that would result if an actual infinite were to be instantiated in the real world. It is usually alleged that this sort of argument has been invalidated by Georg Cantor's work on the actual infinite. But Cantorian set theory may be taken to be simply a universe of discourse, a mathematical system based on certain adopted axioms and conventions. The argument's defender may hold that while the actual infinite may be a fruitful and consistent concept within the postulated universe of discourse, it cannot be transposed into the spatio-temporal world, for this would involve counter-intuitive absurdities. He is at liberty to reject Platonistic views of mathematical objects in favor of non-Platonist views such as fictionalism or divine conceptualism combined with the simplicity of God's cognition.

A second argument for the beginning of the universe offered by classical proponents is that the temporal series of past events cannot be an actual infinite because a collection formed by successive addition cannot be actually infinite. Sometimes the problem was described as the impossibility of traversing the infinite. In order for us to have "arrived" at today, temporal existence has, so to speak, traversed an infinite number of prior events. But before the present event could arrive, the event immediately prior to it would have to arrive; and before that event could arrive, the event immediately prior to it would have to arrive; and so on *ad infinitum*. No event could ever arrive, since before it could elapse there will always be one more event that will had to have happened first. Thus, if the series of past events were beginningless, the present event could not have arrived, which is absurd.

It is frequently objected that this sort of argument illicitly presupposes an infinitely distant starting point in the past and then pronounces it impossible to travel from that point to today, whereas in fact from any given point in the past, there is only a finite distance to the present, which is easily traversed. But proponents of the argument have not in fact assumed that there was an infinitely distant starting point in the past. To traverse a distance is to cross every proper part of it. As such, traversal does not entail that the distance traversed has a beginning or ending point or a first or last part. The fact that there is *no beginning* at all, not even an infinitely distant one, seems only to make the problem worse, not better. To say that the infinite past could have been formed by successive addition is like saying that someone has just succeeded in writing down all the negative numbers, ending at -1. And, we may ask, how is the claim that from any given moment in the past there is only a finite distance to the present even relevant to the issue? For the question is how the *whole* series can be formed, not a finite portion of it. To think that, because every *finite* segment of the series can be formed by successive addition, the whole *infinite* series can as well is to commit the fallacy of composition.

A third argument for the universe's beginning is an inductive argument based on contemporary evidence for the expansion of the universe. The standard Big Bang model does not describe the expansion of the material content of the universe into a pre-existing, empty space, but rather the expansion of space itself. This has the astonishing implication that as one extrapolates back in time, space-time curvature becomes progressively greater until one arrives at a singularity, at which space-time curvature becomes infinite. It therefore constitutes an edge or boundary to space-time itself.

The history of twentieth century cosmology has, in one sense, been a series of failed attempts to craft acceptable non-standard models of the expanding universe in order to avert the absolute beginning predicted by the standard model. While such theories are possible, it has been the overwhelming verdict of the scientific community than none of them is more probable than the Big Bang theory. There is no mathematically consistent model which has been so successful in its predictions or as corroborated by the evidence as the traditional Big Bang theory. For example, some theories, like the Oscillating Universe (which expands and re-contracts forever) or the Chaotic Inflationary Universe (which continually spawns new universes), do have a potentially infinite future but turn out to have only a finite past. Vacuum Fluctuation Universe theories (which postulate an eternal vacuum out of which our universe is born) cannot explain why, if the vacuum was eternal, we do not observe an infinitely old universe. The No-Boundary Universe proposal of Hartle and Hawking, if interpreted realistically, still involves an absolute origin of the

universe even if the universe does not begin in a singularity, as it does in the standard Big Bang theory. Recently proposed Ekpyrotic Cyclic Universe scenarios based on string theory or M-theory have also been shown, not only to be riddled with problems, but, most significantly, to imply the very origin of the universe which its proponents sought to avoid. Of course, scientific results are always provisional, but there is no doubt that one rests comfortably within the scientific mainstream in asserting the truth of premise (2).

A fourth argument for the finitude of the past is also an inductive argument, appealing to thermodynamic properties of the universe. According to the Second Law of Thermodynamics, processes taking place in a closed system tend toward states of higher entropy, as their energy is used up. Already in the nineteenth century scientists realized that the application of the Law to the universe as a whole (which, on naturalistic assumptions, is a gigantic closed system, since it is all there is) implied a grim eschatological conclusion: given sufficient time, the universe would eventually come to a state of equilibrium and suffer heat death. But this apparently firm projection raised an even deeper question: if, given sufficient time, the universe will suffer heat death, then why, if it has existed forever, is it not now in a state of heat death? The advent of relativity theory altered the shape of the eschatological scenario predicted on the basis of the Second Law but did not materially affect this fundamental question. Astrophysical evidence indicates overwhelmingly that the universe will expand forever. As it does, it will become increasingly cold, dark, dilute, and dead. Eventually the entire mass of the universe will be nothing but a cold, thin gas of elementary particles and radiation, growing ever more dilute as it expands into the infinite darkness, a universe in ruins.

But this raises the question: if in a finite amount of time the universe *will* achieve a cold, dark, dilute, and lifeless state, then why, if it has existed for *infinite time*, is it not *now* in such a state? If one is to avoid the conclusion that the universe has not in fact existed forever, then one must find some scientifically plausible way to overturn the findings of physical cosmology so as to permit the universe to return to its youthful condition. But no realistic and plausible scenario is forthcoming.<sup>10</sup> Most cosmologists agree with physicist P. C. W. Davies that whether we like it or not we seemed forced to conclude that the universe's low entropy condition was simply "put in" as an initial condition at the moment of creation.<sup>11</sup>

We thus have good philosophical and scientific grounds for affirming the second premise of the cosmological argument. It is noteworthy that this premise is a religiously neutral statement which can be found in any textbook on astrophysical cosmology, so that facile accusations of "God-of-the gaps" theology find no purchase. Moreover, since a being which exists by a necessity of its own nature must exist either timelessly or sempiternally (otherwise its coming into being or ceasing to be would make it evident that its existence is not necessary), it follows that the universe cannot be metaphysically necessary, which fact closes the final loophole in the contingency argument above.

It follows logically that the universe has a cause. Conceptual analysis of what properties must be possessed by such an ultra-mundane cause enables us to recover a striking number of the traditional divine attributes, revealing that if the universe has a cause, then an uncaused, personal Creator of the universe exists, who, *sans* the universe, is beginningless, changeless, immaterial, timeless, spaceless, and enormously powerful.<sup>12</sup>

### Teleological Argument

We may formulate a design argument as follows:

1. The fine-tuning of the universe is due to either physical necessity, or chance, or design.
2. It is not due to physical necessity or chance.
3. Therefore, it is due to design.

What is meant by "fine-tuning"? The physical laws of nature, when given mathematical expression, contain various constants, such as the gravitational constant, whose values are independent of the laws themselves; moreover, there are certain arbitrary quantities which are simply put in as boundary conditions on which the laws of nature operate, for example, the initial low entropy condition of the universe. By "fine-tuning" one means that the actual values assumed by the constants and quantities in question are such that small deviations from those values would

render the universe life-prohibiting or, alternatively, that the range of life-permitting values is exquisitely narrow in comparison with the range of assumable values.

Laypeople might think that if the constants and quantities had assumed different values, then other forms of life might well have evolved. But this is not the case. By "life" scientists mean that property of organisms to take in food, extract energy from it, grow, adapt to their environment, and reproduce. The point is that in order for the universe to permit life so-defined, whatever form organisms might take, the constants and quantities have to be incomprehensibly fine-tuned. In the absence of fine-tuning, not even matter or chemistry would exist, not to speak of planets where life might evolve.

It has been objected that in universes governed by different laws of nature, such deleterious consequences might not result from varying the values of the constants and quantities. The teleologist need not deny the possibility, for such universes are irrelevant to his argument. All he needs to show is that among possible universes governed by the same laws (but having different values of the constants and quantities) as the actual universe, life-permitting universes are extraordinarily improbable.

Now premise (1) states the three alternatives in the pool of live options for explaining cosmic fine-tuning. The question is which is the best explanation.

Now on the face of it the alternative of physical necessity seems extraordinarily implausible. As we have seen, the values of the physical constants and quantities are independent of the laws of nature. If the primordial matter and anti-matter had been differently proportioned, if the universe had expanded just a little more slowly, if the entropy of the universe were marginally greater, any of these adjustments and more would have prevented a life-permitting universe, yet all seem perfectly possible physically. The person who maintains that the universe must be life-permitting is taking a radical line which requires strong proof. But as yet there is none; this alternative is put forward as a bare possibility.

Sometimes physicists do speak of a yet to be discovered Theory of Everything (T.O.E.), but such nomenclature is, like so many of the colorful names given to scientific theories, quite misleading. A T.O.E. actually has the limited goal of providing a unified theory of the four fundamental forces of nature, but it will not even attempt to explain literally everything. For example, in the most promising candidates for a T.O.E. to date, super-string theory or M-Theory, the physical universe must be 11-dimensional, but why the universe should possess just that number of dimensions is not addressed by the theory. M-Theory simply substitutes geometrical fine-tuning for fine-tuning of forces.

Furthermore, it seems likely that any attempt to significantly reduce fine-tuning will itself turn out to involve fine-tuning. This has certainly been the pattern in the past. In light of the specificity and number of instances of fine-tuning, it is unlikely to disappear with the further advance of physical theory.

What, then, of the alternative of chance? Teleologists seek to eliminate this hypothesis either by appealing to the specified complexity of cosmic fine-tuning (a statistical approach to design inference) or by arguing that the fine-tuning is significantly more probable on design (theism) than on the chance hypothesis (atheism) (a Bayesian approach). Common to both approaches is the claim that the universe's being life-permitting is highly improbable.

In order to save the hypothesis of chance, defenders of that alternative have increasingly recurred to the Many Worlds Hypothesis, according to which a World Ensemble of concrete universes exists, thereby multiplying one's probabilistic resources. In order to guarantee that by chance alone a universe like ours will appear somewhere in the Ensemble, an actually infinite number of such universes is usually postulated. But that is not enough; one must also stipulate that these worlds are randomly ordered with respect to the values of their constants and quantities, lest they be of insufficient variety to include a life-permitting universe.

#### Is the Many Worlds Hypothesis as good an explanation as the Design Hypothesis?

It seems doubtful. In the first place, as a metaphysical hypothesis, the Many Worlds Hypothesis is arguably inferior to the Design Hypothesis because the latter is simpler. According to Ockham's Razor, we should not multiply causes beyond what is necessary to explain the effect. But it is simpler to postulate one Cosmic

Designer to explain our universe than to postulate the infinitely bloated and contrived ontology of the Many Worlds Hypothesis. Only if the Many Worlds theorist could show that there exists a single, comparably simple mechanism for generating a World Ensemble of randomly varied universes would he be able to elude this difficulty.

Second, there is no known way of generating a World Ensemble. No one has been able to explain how or why such a collection of varied universes should exist. Some proposals, like Lee Smolin's cosmic evolutionary scenario, actually served to weed out life-permitting universes, while others, like Andre Linde's chaotic inflationary scenario, turned out to require fine-tuning themselves.

Third, there is no evidence for the existence of a World Ensemble apart from the fine-tuning itself. But the fine-tuning is equally evidence for a Cosmic Designer. Indeed, the hypothesis of a Cosmic Designer is again the better explanation because we have independent evidence of the existence of such a being in the other theistic arguments.

Fourth, if our universe is but one member of an infinite World Ensemble of randomly varying universes, then it is overwhelmingly more probable that we should be observing a much different universe than that which we in fact observe. Roger Penrose calculates that the odds of our universe's low entropy condition obtaining by chance alone are on the order of  $1:10^{10^{123}}$ , an inconceivable number. By contrast, the odds of our solar system's being formed instantly by random collisions of particles is, according to Penrose, about  $1:10^{10^{60}}$ , a vast number, but inconceivably smaller than  $10^{10^{123}}$ . If our universe were but one member of a collection of randomly ordered worlds, then it is vastly more probable that we should be observing a much smaller universe. Adopting the Many Worlds Hypothesis to explain away fine-tuning would thus result in a bizarre illusionism: it is far more probable that all our astronomical, geological, and biological estimates of age are wrong and that the appearance of our large and old universe is a massive illusion. Or again, if our universe is but one member of a World Ensemble, then we ought to be observing highly extraordinary events, like horses' popping into and out of existence by random collisions, or perpetual motion machines, since these are vastly more probable than all of nature's constants and quantities falling by chance into the virtually infinitesimal life-permitting range. Observable universes like those are much more plenteous in the ensemble of universes than worlds like ours and, therefore, ought to be observed by us if the universe were but one member of an ensemble of worlds. Since we do not have such observations, that fact strongly disconfirms the multiverse hypothesis. On atheism, at least, it is therefore highly probable that there is no World Ensemble. Penrose concludes that anthropic explanations are so "impotent" that it is actually "misconceived" to appeal to them to explain the special features of the universe.<sup>13</sup> Thus, the Many Worlds Hypothesis fails as a plausible explanation of cosmic fine-tuning.

It therefore seems that the fine-tuning of the universe is plausibly due neither to physical necessity nor to chance. Unless the design hypothesis can be shown to be even more implausible than its competitors, it follows that the fine-tuning is due to design.

### Moral Argument

Theists have presented a wide variety of moral justifications for belief in a Deity. One such argument may be formulated as follows:

1. If God does not exist, objective moral values and duties do not exist.
2. Objective moral values and duties do exist.
3. Therefore, God exists.

Consider premise (1). To speak of objective moral values and duties is to say that moral distinctions between what is good/bad or right/wrong hold independently of whether any human being holds to such distinctions. Many theists and atheists alike agree that if God does not exist, then moral values and duties are not objective in this sense.

For if God does not exist, then what is the foundation for moral values? More particularly, what is the basis for the value of human beings? If God does not exist, then it is difficult to see any reason to think that human beings are special or that their morality is objectively valid. Moreover, why think that we have any moral obligations to do anything? Who or what imposes any moral duties upon us? As a result of socio-biological pressures, there has evolved among *homo sapiens* a sort of "herd morality" which functions well in the perpetuation of our species in the struggle for survival. But there does not seem to be anything about *homo sapiens* that makes this morality objectively binding. If the film of evolutionary history were rewound and shot anew, very different creatures with a very different set of values might well have evolved. By what right do we regard our morality as objective rather than theirs? As the humanist philosopher Paul Kurtz puts it, "The central question about moral and ethical principles concerns this ontological foundation. If they are neither derived from God nor anchored in some transcendent ground, are they purely ephemeral?"<sup>14</sup>

Some philosophers, equally averse to transcendentally existing moral values as to theism, try to maintain the existence of objective moral principles or supervenient moral properties in the context of a naturalistic worldview. But the advocates of such theories are typically at a loss to justify their starting point. If there is no God, then it is hard to see any ground for thinking that the herd morality evolved by *homo sapiens* is objectively true or moral goodness supervenes on certain natural states of such creatures. Crudely put, on the atheistic view humans are just animals; and animals are not moral agents.

If our approach to meta-ethical theory is to be serious metaphysics rather than just a "shopping list" approach, whereby one simply helps oneself to the supervenient moral properties or principles needed to do the job, then some sort of explanation is required for why moral properties supervene on certain natural states or why such principles are true.<sup>15</sup> It is insufficient for the naturalist to point out that we do, in fact, apprehend the goodness of some feature of human existence, for that only goes to establish the objectivity of moral values and duties, which just is premise (2) of the moral argument.

We therefore need to ask whether moral values and duties can be plausibly anchored in some transcendent, non-theistic ground. Let us call this view Atheistic Moral Realism. Atheistic moral realists affirm that objective moral values and duties do exist and are not dependent upon evolution or human opinion, but they insist that they are not grounded in God. Indeed, moral values have no further foundation. They just exist.

It is difficult, however, even to comprehend this view. What does it mean to say, for example, that the moral value *Justice* just exists? It is hard to know what to make of this. It is clear what is meant when it is said that a person is just; but it is bewildering when it is said that in the absence of any people, *Justice* itself exists.

Second, the nature of moral obligation seems incompatible with Atheistic Moral Realism. Suppose that values like *Mercy*, *Justice*, *Forbearance*, and the like just exist. How does that result in any moral obligations for me? Why would I have a moral duty, say, to be merciful? Who or what lays such an obligation on me? On this view moral vices such as *Greed*, *Hatred*, and *Selfishness* also presumably exist as abstract objects, too. Why am I obligated to align my life with one set of these abstractly existing objects rather than any other? In contrast with the atheist, the theist can make sense of moral obligation because God's commands can be viewed as constitutive of our moral duties.

Thirdly, it is fantastically improbable that just that sort of creatures would emerge from the blind evolutionary process who correspond to the abstractly existing realm of moral values. This seems to be an utterly incredible coincidence when one thinks about it. It is almost as though the moral realm *knew* that we were coming. It is far more plausible to regard both the natural realm and the moral realm as under the hegemony of a divine Creator and Lawgiver than to think that these two entirely independent orders of reality just happened to mesh.

Although theistic meta-ethics assumes a rich variety of forms, there has been in recent years a resurgence of interest in Divine Command Morality, which understands our moral duties as our obligations to God in light of His moral commands, for example, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself," and so on. Our moral duties are constituted by the commands of an impartial and loving God. For any action *A* and moral agent *S*, we can explicate the notions of moral requirement, permission, and forbiddenness of *A* for *S*:

A is required of *S* if an impartial and loving God commands *S* to do *A*.

A is permitted for *S* if an impartial and loving God does not command *S* not to do *A*.

A is forbidden to *S* if an impartial and loving God commands *S* not to do *A*.

Since our moral duties are grounded in the divine commands, they are not independent of God nor is God bound by moral duties, since He does not issue commands to Himself. Neither are God's commands arbitrary, since they are necessary expressions of His nature.

The question might be pressed as to why God's nature should be taken to be definitive of goodness. But unless we are nihilists, we have to recognize some ultimate standard of value, and God seems to be the least arbitrary stopping point. Moreover, God's nature is singularly appropriate to serve as such a standard. For by definition, God is the greatest conceivable being, and it is greater to be the paradigm of moral value than merely to conform to such a standard. More specifically, God is by definition a being worthy of worship. And only a being which is the locus and source of all value is worthy of worship.

Traditional arguments for God's existence such as the above, not to mention creative new arguments, are alive and well on the contemporary scene in Anglo-American philosophy. Together with the failure of anti-theistic arguments, they help to explain the renaissance of interest in theism.

### Notes

<sup>1</sup>Paul Benacerraf, "What Mathematical Truth Could Not Be—I," in *Benacerraf and His Critics*, ed. Adam Morton and Stephen P. Stich (Oxford: Blackwell: 1996), p. 18.

<sup>2</sup>The change has not gone unnoticed even in popular culture. In 1980 *Time* magazine ran a major story entitled "Modernizing the Case for God" in which it described the movement among contemporary philosophers to refurbish the traditional arguments for God's existence. *Time* marveled, "In a quiet revolution in thought and argument that hardly anybody could have foreseen only two decades ago, God is making a comeback. Most intriguingly, this is happening not among theologians or ordinary believers, but in the crisp intellectual circles of academic philosophers, where the consensus had long banished the Almighty from fruitful discourse" ("Modernizing the Case for God," *Time*, Apr. 7, 1980], pp. 65-66). The article cites the late Roderick Chisholm to the effect that the reason that atheism was so influential a generation ago is that the brightest philosophers were atheists; but today, in his opinion, many of the brightest philosophers are theists, using a tough-minded intellectualism in defense of that belief that was formerly lacking on their side of the debate.

<sup>3</sup>Quentin Smith, "The Metaphilosophy of Naturalism" *Philo* 4/2(2001): 3-4. A sign of the times: *Philo* itself, unable to succeed as a secular organ, has now become a journal for general philosophy of religion.

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 4.

<sup>5</sup>One of the most significant developments in contemporary Religious Epistemology has been so-called Reformed Epistemology, spearheaded and developed by Alvin Plantinga, which directly assaults the evidentialist construal of rationality. With respect to the belief that God exists, Plantinga holds that God has so constituted us that we naturally form this belief under certain circumstances; since the belief is thus formed by properly functioning cognitive faculties in an appropriate environment, it is warranted for us, and, insofar as our faculties are not disrupted by the noetic effects of sin, we shall believe this proposition deeply and firmly, so that we can be said, in virtue of the great warrant accruing to this belief for us, to know that God exists.

<sup>6</sup>On Jesus' resurrection see N. T. Wright, *Christian Origins and the Question of God, vol. 3: The Resurrection of the Son of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003).

<sup>7</sup>Daniel Howard-Snyder, "Introduction," in *The Evidential Argument from Evil*, ed. Daniel Howard-Snyder (Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 1996), p. xi.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid. The Christian theist will therefore insist that in assessing the external problem of evil we consider, not just the evil in the world, but all the evidence relevant to God's existence, including the contingency argument for a Sufficient Reason why something exists rather than nothing, the cosmological argument for a Creator of the universe, the teleological argument for an intelligent Designer of the cosmos, the axiological argument for an ultimate, personally-embodied Good, the no-logical argument for an ultimate Mind, the epistemological argument for a Designer of our truth-directed cognitive faculties, the ontological argument for a Maximally Great Being, as well as evidence concerning the person of Christ, the historicity of the resurrection, the existence of miracles, and, in addition, existential and religious experience.

<sup>9</sup>The story of Hilbert's Hotel is related in George Gamow, *One, Two, Three, Infinity* (London: Macmillan, 1946), 17.

<sup>10</sup>See survey of options in my "Time, Eternity, and Eschatology," in *Oxford Handbook on Eschatology*, ed. J. Walls (Oxford: Oxford University Press, forthcoming).

<sup>11</sup>P. C. W. Davies, *The Physics of Time Asymmetry* (London: Surrey University Press, 1974), p. 104.

<sup>12</sup>See argument in my "Naturalism and Cosmology," in *Analytic Philosophy without Naturalism*, ed. A. Corradini, S. Galvan, and J. Lowe (London: Routledge, 2005).

<sup>13</sup>Roger Penrose, *The Road to Reality* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2005), pp. 762-5.

<sup>14</sup>Paul Kurtz, *Forbidden Fruit* (Buffalo, N.Y.: Prometheus Books, 1988), p. 65.

<sup>15</sup>Some philosophers seem to suppose that moral truths, being necessarily true, cannot have an explanation of their truth. The crucial presupposition that necessary truths cannot stand in relations of explanatory priority to one another is not merely not evidently true, but seems plainly false. For example, the proposition A plurality of persons exists is necessarily true (in a broadly logical sense) because God exists is necessarily true and God is essentially a Trinity. To give a non-theological example, on a non-fictionalist account  $2+3=5$  is necessarily true because the Peano axioms for standard arithmetic are necessarily true. Or again, No event precedes itself is necessarily true because Temporal becoming is an essential and objective feature of time is necessarily true. It would be utterly implausible to suggest that the relation of explanatory priority obtaining between the relevant propositions is symmetrical.

"Vilenkin's Cosmic Vision: A Review of *Many Worlds in One: The Search for Other Universes* by Alex Vilenkin" by William Lane Craig, Reasonable Faith

2009, (<http://www.reasonablefaith.org/vilenkins-cosmic-vision-a-review-essay-of-many-worlds-in-one>)

(*Many Worlds in One: The Search for Other Universes* by Alexander Vilenkin, New York: Hill and Wang, 2006. 235 pages.)

Vilenkin's recent book is a wonderful popular introduction to contemporary cosmology. It contains provocative discussions of both the beginning of the universe and of the fine-tuning of the universe for intelligent life. Vilenkin is a prominent exponent of the multiverse hypothesis, which features in the book's title. His defense of this hypothesis depends in a crucial and interesting way on conflating time and space. His claim that his theory of the quantum creation of the universe explains the origin of the universe from nothing trades on a misunderstanding of "nothing."

The task of scientific popularization is a difficult one. Too many authors think that it is to be accomplished by frequent resort to explanatorily vacuous and obfuscating metaphors which leave the reader puzzling over what exactly a particular theory asserts. One of the great merits of Alexander Vilenkin's book is that he shuns this route in favor of straightforward, simple explanations of key terms and ideas. Couple that with a writing style that is marvelously lucid, and you have one of the best popularizations of current physical cosmology available from one of its foremost practitioners.

Vilenkin vigorously champions the idea that we live in a multiverse, that is to say, the causally connected universe is but one domain in a much vaster cosmos which comprises an infinite number of such domains. Moreover, each causally connected domain is subdivided into an infinite number of subdomains, each constituting an observable universe bounded by an event horizon. As if that were not enough, Vilenkin also endorses Everett's Many Worlds Interpretation of quantum physics, so that even the infinite multiverse is but one of an indefinitely large class of distinct multiverses. The result is a breath-taking vision of physical reality.

At the heart of Vilenkin's vision of the world is the theory of future-eternal, or everlasting, inflation (Vilenkin misleadingly calls it eternal inflation, even though he holds that the inflationary multiverse has only a finite past). According to generic inflationary theory, our universe exists in a true vacuum state with an energy density that is nearly zero, but earlier it existed in a false vacuum state with a very high energy density. The energy density of the false vacuum overwhelms even the intense gravitational attraction generated by the extremely high matter density of the early universe, causing a super-rapid, or inflationary, expansion, during which the universe grew from atomic proportions to a size larger than the observable universe in a thirtieth of a microsecond. Vilenkin does a nice job of explaining the empirical evidence that supports the fact of such an early inflationary era.

But Vilenkin needs more than generic inflationary theory. In order to ensure eternal inflation, Vilenkin hypothesizes that the scalar fields determining the energy density and evolution of the false vacuum state are characterized by a certain slope which issues in a false vacuum expanding so rapidly that, as it decays into pockets of true vacuum, the "island universes" thereby generated in this sea of false vacuum, though themselves expanding at enormous rates, cannot keep up with the expansion of the false vacuum and so find themselves increasingly separated with time. New pockets of true vacuum will continue to form in the gaps between the island universes and become themselves isolated worlds. Despite the fact that the multiverse is finite and geometrically closed, Vilenkin claims that the false vacuum will go on expanding forever. He does not explain how this is consistent, apart from special pleading, with the Second Law of Thermodynamics.

At this point Vilenkin executes a nifty piece of legerdemain. As the island universes expand, their central regions eventually grow dark and barren, while stars are forming at their ever-expanding perimeters. We should think of the decay of false vacuum to true vacuum going on at the islands' expanding boundaries as multiple Big Bangs. From the global perspective of the inflating multiverse, these Big Bangs occur successively, as the island boundaries grow with time. In the global time of the multiverse, each island is at any time finite in extent though growing. Now comes the sleight of hand. When we consider the internal, cosmic time of each island universe, each can be traced back to an initial Big Bang event. We can now string together these various Big Bang events as occurring simultaneously. Big Bangs which will occur in the global future are now to be regarded as present. As a result, the infinite, temporal series of successive Big Bangs is converted into an infinite, spatial array of simultaneous Big Bangs. Hence, from the internal point of view each island universe is infinite in extent.

This blurring of appearance and reality leads Vilenkin to some bizarre conclusions. Since each island universe is taken to be infinite by its inhabitants, it can be subdivided into an infinite number of observable regions (or O-regions) each the size of our observable universe. Quantum mechanics implies that there is only a finite number of histories from the Big Bang to any moment in any O-region. Hence, given an infinite number of O-regions, it follows that every single history is repeated an infinite number of times. Thus, our own world in minutest detail is duplicated an infinite number of times throughout the O-regions in our island. Indeed, "all possible variations" on our world's history will appear an infinite number of times in the ensemble of O-regions.

Notice that this conclusion presupposes that the physical world can be completely described by the equations of quantum mechanics. As such, it is subverted by the presence in the world of agents endowed with freedom of the will whose actions are emphatically not random. There is no reason whatsoever to think that in some O-region Adolf Hitler (or his counterpart) will deliver his Nürnberg address standing on his head, much less that he (or they) would decide to do something so silly an infinite number of times. But never mind; the more fundamental error on Vilenkin's part is his deft transformation of an infinite, temporal succession of future O-regions into an infinite, spatial array of simultaneous O-regions. We see the switch when he says, "any history that has a nonzero probability will happen—or rather has happened—in an infinite number of O-regions!" (p. 112). Viewed globally, these O-regions are in the future and will be infinite in number only in the sense that the island will continue to exist forever. Even more fundamentally, Vilenkin's conclusion seems to presuppose spacetime realism or, as it is sometimes called, four-dimensionalism, for if tense and temporal becoming are objective features of reality, then

the future is potentially infinite only, and future O-regions do not in any sense exist. If there is a global tide of becoming, then there is no actually infinite collection of O-regions after all.

This reviewer cannot help but wonder about the psychology of persons who seem to find a certain glee in the prospect of infinite duplicates of our world. (I'm told that Vilenkin initially found this idea depressing; but if so, he seems to have gotten over it.) Why do some people seem to find this idea so attractive? I think we have a clue in Vilenkin's *A Farewell to Uniqueness*, where he writes:

In the worldview that has emerged from eternal inflation, our Earth and our civilization are anything but unique. Instead, countless identical civilizations are scattered in the infinite expanse of the cosmos. With humankind reduced to absolute cosmic insignificance, our descent from the center of the universe is now complete (p. 117).

Never mind the odd assumption that the significance of humankind is to be assessed in terms of its rarity in the cosmos; it is the note of celebration that accompanies this alleged demotion that strikes me.

Much of Vilenkin's interest in postulating many worlds in one is to find purchase for the Anthropic Principle in order to explain away the fine-tuning of the universe. Quantum fluctuations in the scalar fields determine what sort of vacuum will decay out of the false vacuum, each associated with a different set of values for the constants of nature. By postulating an infinite array of island universes, randomly varying in their constants, Vilenkin can appeal to the Anthropic Principle to explain away the observed fine-tuning: our observations are constrained by a selection effect imposed by our own existence. Postulating many worlds enables one to avoid the inference to design, which might be taken to place homo sapiens (the most complex structure in the world) at the center of the universe. The delight in duplicate worlds springs from the consequent dethronement of mankind as the crown of creation.

But if an infinite ensemble of simultaneous island universes does not actually exist, Vilenkin's attempt to explain away the fine-tuning of the universe for intelligent life collapses. For if, in fact, an infinite array of island universes does not yet exist, if most of them lie in the potentially infinite future and are therefore unreal, then there actually exist only as many universes as can have formed in the false vacuum since the multiverse's inception at its boundary in the finite past. Given the incomprehensible improbability of the constants' all falling randomly into the life-permitting range, it may well be highly improbable that a life-permitting island universe should have decayed this soon out of the false vacuum. In that case the sting of fine-tuning has not been relieved.

Vilenkin's whole multiverse scenario depends, it will be recalled, on the hypothesis of eternal inflation, which in turn is based upon the existence of certain primordial scalar fields which govern inflation. Although Vilenkin observes that "Inflation is eternal in practically all models suggested so far" (p. 214), he also admits, "Another important question is whether or not such scalar fields really exist in nature. Unfortunately, we don't know. There is no direct evidence for their existence" (p. 61). One would have thought that this lack of evidence would have tempered the confidence with which Vilenkin promotes the multiverse hypothesis.

Wholly apart from its speculative nature, however, the multiverse hypothesis faces a potentially lethal problem, which Vilenkin does not even mention. Simply stated, if our universe is but one member of an infinite collection of randomly varying universes, then it is overwhelmingly more probable that we should be observing a much different universe than that which we in fact observe. This same problem proved devastating for Ludwig Boltzmann's appeal to a multiverse hypothesis in classical physics in order to explain why, if it has existed forever, the universe is not now in a state of thermodynamic equilibrium or heat death. Boltzmann made the bold speculation that the universe as a whole does, in fact, exist in a state of heat death, but that here and there random fluctuations produce pockets of disequilibrium, which Boltzmann referred to as "worlds." Ours is one of these, and we should not be surprised to observe our world in such a highly improbable disequilibrium state, since observers cannot exist anywhere else. Boltzmann's daring hypothesis has been universally rejected by contemporary physics on the grounds that were our universe but one such world in a multiverse, it is vastly more probable that we should be observing a much smaller region of disequilibrium—even one in which our solar system alone was produced in the twinkling of an eye by a random fluctuation—than what we do observe, since that is incomparably more probable than the whole universe's being progressively formed by a decline in entropy from an equilibrium state.

Now a similar problem afflicts the contemporary appeal to the multiverse to explain away fine-tuning. Roger Penrose has calculated that the odds of our universe's low entropy condition obtaining by chance alone are on the order of  $1:10^{10^{123}}$ , an inconceivable number. If our universe were but one member of a multiverse of randomly ordered worlds, then it is vastly more probable that we should be observing a much smaller orderly universe. The odds of our solar system's being formed instantly by random collisions of particles is, according to Penrose, about  $1:10^{10^{60}}$ , a vast number, but inconceivably smaller than  $10^{10^{123}}$ . Or again, if our universe is but one member of a multiverse, then we ought to be observing highly extraordinary events, like horses' popping into and out of existence by random collisions, or perpetual motion machines, since these are vastly more probable than all the constants and quantities of nature's falling by chance into the virtually infinitesimal life-permitting range. Observable universes like those are much more plentiful in the ensemble of universes than worlds like ours and, therefore, ought to be observed by us if the universe were but one member of a multiverse of worlds. Since we do not have such observations, that fact strongly disconfirms the multiverse hypothesis. On naturalism, at least, it is therefore highly probable that there is no multiverse.

But Vilenkin is not through yet. While acknowledging that most physicists take an agnostic attitude toward the physical interpretation of quantum mechanics, Vilenkin feels compelled to embrace Everett's Many Worlds Interpretation. On the Copenhagen interpretation it is measurement by an observer which reduces quantum indeterminacy to a precise state. "The 'orthodox' Copenhagen interpretation, which requires an external observer to perform measurements on the system, cannot even be formulated in this case [i.e., quantum cosmology]: there are no observers external to the universe" (p. 115). Such an assertion seems, however, to presuppose atheism. Moreover, it ignores the fact that Copenhagen and Many Worlds do not exhaust our choices: there are plenty of alternatives.

Tellingly, Vilenkin later asserts that his own favored theory of quantum creation presupposes as a necessary condition the Many Worlds Interpretation:

If the Copenhagen interpretation is adopted, then the creation was a one-shot event, with a single universe popping out of nothing. This, however, leads to a problem. The most likely thing to pop out of nothing is a tiny Planck-sized universe, which would not tunnel, but would instantly collapse and disappear. Tunneling to a larger size has a small probability and therefore requires a large number of trials. It appears to be consistent only with the Everett interpretation (p. 187).

Vilenkin had better hope that such is not the case, for most philosophers and physicists would regard it as the *reductio ad absurdum* of his creation account.

This brings us to the other great cosmological question that occupies Vilenkin in the book: whether the universe—or, rather, multiverse—had an absolute beginning. After recounting the prediction of an absolute beginning by the standard Big Bang model and cataloguing various attempts to avert it, Vilenkin explains his formulation with Arvind Borde and Alan Guth in 2003 of a theorem which establishes that any universe which has on average over its past history been in a state of expansion cannot be infinite in the past but must have a spacetime boundary. This is a theorem of great power which applies both to inflationary models and to current, higher dimensional, brane cosmological models based on string theory, as well to as typical expansion models. Vilenkin pulls no punches: "It is said that an argument is what convinces reasonable men and a proof is what it takes to convince even an unreasonable man. With the proof now in place, cosmologists can no longer hide behind the possibility of a past-eternal universe. There is no escape, they have to face the problem of a cosmic beginning" (p. 176).

While recognizing that theologians have often welcomed evidence of the universe's beginning as evidence for God's existence, Vilenkin dismisses such a view as "far too simplistic" (p. 177). How so? Vilenkin cites the Jain poet Jinasena, who asked, "If God created the world, where was He before creation?" and "How could God have made the world without any raw material?" (p. 170). Since Vilenkin rejects the Jain view that the world is uncreated and eternal, he knows that similar "paradoxes" face him as well (p. 177). If theism is simplistic, therefore, it will not be because it confronts peculiar problems, but because it stops short of addressing those problems. Vilenkin seems to assume that the theist is stupefied in the face of such questions. But that is hardly the case. Jinasena's first question concerns the efficient cause of the universe and his second the material cause. The first question is not difficult to answer: "Nowhere," since space and time come into being at creation, so that there is no "before" and "where" prior to the beginning. The second question is more baffling; but if Vilenkin's theory of quantum tunneling

provides an account of how the universe can arise without a material cause, then the theist may freely avail himself of it also. The advantage of theism over naturalistic accounts is that theism provides an efficient cause of the universe, whereas naturalism cannot.

The naturalist is therefore constrained to say that the universe came into being without either an efficient or a material cause. Vilenkin's theory of quantum creation is precisely an attempt to make such a view plausible. His exposition of his model is so clear and simple that it is easy for the metaphysician to see where Vilenkin has misconstrued its ontological import. He invites us to envision a small, closed, spherical universe filled with a false vacuum and containing some ordinary matter. If the radius of such a universe is small, classical physics predicts that it will collapse to a point; but quantum physics permits it to "tunnel" into a state of inflation. (Recall that such an event is nonetheless so improbable that the Many Worlds Interpretation must be invoked to save the account.) If we allow the radius to shrink all the way to zero, there still remains some positive probability of the universe's tunneling to inflation. Now Vilenkin equates the initial state of the universe explanatorily prior to tunneling with nothingness: "what I had was a mathematical description of a universe tunneling from zero size—from nothing!—to a finite radius and beginning to inflate" (p. 180). This equivalence is patently mistaken. As Vilenkin's diagram on the same page illustrates, the quantum tunneling is at every point a function from something to something. For quantum tunneling to be truly from nothing, the function would have to have a single term, the posterior term. Another way of seeing the point is to reflect on the fact that "to have no radius" (as is the case with nothingness) is not "to have a radius whose measure is zero."

Vilenkin himself seems to realize that he has not really described the tunneling of the universe from literally nothing, for he allows, "And yet, the state of 'nothing' cannot be identified with *absolute nothingness*. The tunneling is described by the laws of quantum mechanics, and thus 'nothing' should be subjected to these laws" (p. 181). It follows that the universe described by those laws is not nothing. Unfortunately, Vilenkin draws the mistaken inference that "The laws of physics must have existed, even though there was no universe" (p. 181). Even if one takes a Platonistic view of the laws of nature, they are at most either mathematical objects or propositions, abstract entities that have no effect on anything. (Intriguingly, Vilenkin entertains a conceptualist view according to which the laws exist in a mind which predates the universe [p. 205], the closest Vilenkin comes to theism). If these laws are truly descriptive, then obviously it cannot be true that "there was no universe." Of course, the laws could have existed and been false, in which case they are non-descriptive; but then Vilenkin's theory will be false.

That Vilenkin has not truly grasped how radical being's coming from non-being is is evident from his incredulity at the claim of the Hartle-Hawking model that an infinite universe should arise from nothing. He exclaims, "The most probable thing to pop out of nothing is then an infinite, empty, flat space. I find this very hard to believe!" (p. 191). Vilenkin finds it easier to believe that an itchy-bitsy universe should pop into being out of nothing. He thereby evinces a lack of understanding of the metaphysical chasm that separates being from non-being. As A.N. Prior pointed out, if something can come out of nothing, then it becomes inexplicable why anything and everything—including an infinite universe—do not come into being out of nothing.

Vilenkin, then, cannot answer the paradoxes of creation as well as can the theist. In fact, the conjunction of theism with Vilenkin's model would be a congenial account of creation. We could have a complete, scientific description of the universe back to its beginning, at which God created the initial state of the universe. But naturalism on its own cannot do the job. If efficient causality apart from material causation seems difficult, then the origin of the universe without either efficient or material causation is even more so.

One might try to rescue a naturalistic quantum tunneling account by providing a mathematical description of it in terms of Euclidean, or what Hawking calls imaginary, time. In that case the universe does not come into being at all but exists timelessly as a non-singular, four-dimensional manifold having a shape analogous to that of a shuttlecock. Hawking, at least, famously took this to eliminate the need for a Creator. But it is interesting that Vilenkin will have no truck with such a realist construal of the Euclidean four-space. It is introduced "only for computational convenience" (p. 182). The Hartle-Hawking no-boundary proposal "lost much of its intuitive appeal" after switching to Euclidean time; in fact, "it instructs us to sum over histories that are certainly impossible, because we do not live in Euclidean time" (pp. 190-1). This is sensible metaphysics; but it precludes recourse to imaginary time as a way of avoiding the so-called paradoxes of creation.

Vilenkin has interesting things to say on other topics—physical eschatology, for example—, but his treatment of the central themes of fine-tuning and cosmic origins, discussed in this review, will be especially interesting to philosophers of religion interested in cosmological and teleological arguments for a Creator and Designer of the universe.

["What Can You Really Know?" by Freeman Dyson, \*The New York Review of Books\*](#)

Nov. 8, 2012, (<http://www.nybooks.com/articles/archives/2012/nov/08/what-can-you-really-know/?pagination=false>)

(*Why Does the World Exist?: An Existential Detective Story* by Jim Holt, Liveright, 307 pp., \$27.95)

Jim Holt's *Why Does the World Exist?: An Existential Detective Story* is a portrait gallery of leading modern philosophers. He visited each of them in turn, warning them in advance that he was coming to discuss with them a single question: "Why is there something rather than nothing?" He reports their reactions to this question, and embellishes their words with descriptions of their habits and personalities. Their answers give us vivid glimpses of the speakers but do not solve the riddle of existence.

The philosophers are more interesting than the philosophy. Most of them are eccentric characters who have risen to the top of their profession. They think their deep thoughts in places of unusual beauty such as Paris and Oxford. They are heirs to an ancient tradition of academic hierarchy, in which disciples sat at the feet of sages, and sages enlightened disciples with Delphic utterances. The universities of Paris and Oxford have maintained this tradition for eight hundred years. The great world religions have maintained it even longer. Universities and religions are the most durable of human institutions.

According to Holt, the two most influential philosophers of the twentieth century were Martin Heidegger and Ludwig Wittgenstein, Heidegger supreme in continental Europe, Wittgenstein in the English-speaking world. Heidegger was one of the founders of existentialism, a school of philosophy that was especially attractive to French intellectuals. Heidegger himself lost his credibility in 1933 when he accepted the position of rector of the University of Freiburg under the newly established Hitler government and became a member of the Nazi Party. Existentialism continued to flourish in France after it faded in Germany.

Wittgenstein, unlike Heidegger, did not establish an ism. He wrote very little, and everything that he wrote was simple and clear. The only book that he published during his lifetime was *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, written in Vienna in 1918 and published in England with a long introduction by Bertrand Russell in 1922. It fills less than two hundred small pages, even though the original German and the English translation are printed side by side. I was lucky to be given a copy of the *Tractatus* as a prize when I was in high school. I read it through in one night, in an ecstasy of adolescent enthusiasm. Most of it is about mathematical logic. Only the last five pages deal with human problems. The text is divided into numbered sections, each consisting of one or two sentences. For example, section 6.521 says: "The solution of the problem of life is seen in the vanishing of this problem. Is not this the reason why men, to whom after long doubting the sense of life became clear, could not then say wherein this sense consisted?" The most famous sentence in the book is the final section 7: "Whereof one cannot speak, thereof one must be silent."

I found the book enlightening and liberating. It said that philosophy is simple and has limited scope. Philosophy is concerned with logic and the correct use of language. All speculations outside this limited area are mysticism. Section 6.522 says: "There is indeed the inexpressible. This shows itself. It is the mystical." Since the mystical is inexpressible, there is nothing more to be said. Holt summarizes the difference between Heidegger and Wittgenstein in nine words: "Wittgenstein was brave and ascetic, Heidegger treacherous and vain." These words apply equally to their characters as human beings and to their intellectual output.

Wittgenstein's intellectual asceticism had a great influence on the philosophers of the English-speaking world. It narrowed the scope of philosophy by excluding ethics and aesthetics. At the same time, his personal asceticism enhanced his credibility. During World War II, he wanted to serve his adopted country in a practical way. Being too

old for military service, he took a leave of absence from his academic position in Cambridge and served in a menial job, as a hospital orderly taking care of patients. When I arrived at Cambridge University in 1946, Wittgenstein had just returned from his six years of duty at the hospital. I held him in the highest respect and was delighted to find him living in a room above mine on the same staircase. I frequently met him walking up or down the stairs, but I was too shy to start a conversation. Several times I heard him muttering to himself: "I get stupider and stupider every day."

Finally, toward the end of my time in Cambridge, I ventured to speak to him. I told him I had enjoyed reading the *Tractatus*, and I asked him whether he still held the same views that he had expressed twenty-eight years earlier. He remained silent for a long time and then said, "Which newspaper do you represent?" I told him I was a student and not a journalist, but he never answered my question.

Wittgenstein's response to me was humiliating, and his response to female students who tried to attend his lectures was even worse. If a woman appeared in the audience, he would remain standing silent until she left the room. I decided that he was a charlatan using outrageous behavior to attract attention. I hated him for his rudeness. Fifty years later, walking through a churchyard on the outskirts of Cambridge on a sunny morning in winter, I came by chance upon his tombstone, a massive block of stone lightly covered with fresh snow. On the stone was written the single word, "WITTGENSTEIN." To my surprise, I found that the old hatred was gone, replaced by a deeper understanding. He was at peace, and I was at peace too, in the white silence. He was no longer an ill-tempered charlatan. He was a tortured soul, the last survivor of a family with a tragic history, living a lonely life among strangers, trying until the end to express the inexpressible.

The philosophers that Holt interviewed wander over a wide landscape. The main theme of their discussions is a disagreement between two groups that I call materialists and Platonists. Materialists imagine a world built out of atoms. Platonists imagine a world built out of ideas. This division into two categories is a gross simplification, lumping together people with a great variety of opinions. Like taxonomists who name species of plants and animals, observers of the philosophical scene may be splitters or lumpers. Splitters like to name many species; lumpers like to name few.

Holt is a splitter and I am a lumper. Philosophers are mostly splitters, dividing their ways of thinking into narrow specialties such as theism or deism or humanism or panpsychism or axiarchism. Examples of each of these isms are to be seen in Holt's collection. I find it more convenient to lump them into two big groups, one obsessed with matter and the other obsessed with mind. Holt asks them to explain why the world exists. For the materialists, the question concerns the origin of space and time and particles and fields, and the relevant branch of science is physics. For the Platonists, the question concerns the origin of meaning and purpose and consciousness, and the relevant science is psychology.

The most impressive of the Platonists is John Leslie, who spent most of his life teaching philosophy at the University of Guelph and is now living in retirement on the west coast of Canada. He calls himself an extreme axiarchist. The word "axiarchism" is Greek for "value rules," meaning that the world is built out of ideas, and the Platonic idea of the Good gives value to everything that exists. Leslie takes seriously Plato's image of the cave as a metaphor of human life. We live in a cave, seeing only shadows cast on the wall by light streaming in from the entrance. The real objects outside the cave are ideas, and all the things that we perceive inside are imperfect images of ideas. Evil exists because our images are distorted. The ultimate reality hidden from our view is Goodness. Goodness is a strong enough force to pull the universe into existence. Leslie understands that this explanation of existence is a poetic fantasy rather than a logical argument. Fantasy comes to the rescue when logic fails. The whole range of Plato's thinking is embodied in his dialogues, which are dramatic reconstructions of the conversations of his master Socrates. They are based on imagination, not on logic.

In 1996 Leslie published a book, *The End of the World*, taking a gloomy view of the human situation. He was calculating the probable future duration of the human species, basing his argument on the Copernican principle, which says that the situation of the human observer in the cosmos should be in no way exceptional. Copernicus gave his name to this principle when he moved the earth from its position at the center of the Aristotelian universe and put it into a more modest position as one of the planets orbiting around the sun.

Leslie argued that the Copernican principle should apply to our position in time as well as to our position in space. As observers of the passage of time, we should not put ourselves into a privileged position at the beginning of the history of our species. As Copernican observers, we should expect to be in an average position in our history, rather than close to the beginning. Therefore, we should expect the future duration of our species to be not much longer than its past. Since we know that our species originated about a hundred thousand years ago, we should expect it to become extinct about a hundred thousand years from now.

When Leslie published this prognostication, I protested strongly against it, claiming that it was a technically wrong use of the theory of probability. In fact Leslie's argument was technically correct. The reason I did not like the argument was that I did not like the conclusion. I thought that the universe had a purpose, and that our minds were a part of that purpose. Since the goodness of the universe was revealed in our existence as observers, we could rely on the goodness of the universe to allow us to continue to exist. I opposed Leslie's argument because I was a better Platonist than he was.

The antithesis of John Leslie is David Deutsch, whose book *The Beginning of Infinity* I recently reviewed in these pages.\* Holt visited Deutsch at his home in a village a few miles from Oxford. The chapter describing the visit is entitled "The Magus of the Multiverse." Deutsch is a professional physicist who uses physics as a basis for philosophical speculation. Unlike most philosophers, he understands quantum mechanics and feels at home in a quantum universe. He likes the many-universe interpretation of quantum mechanics, invented in the 1950s by Hugh Everett, who was then a student in Princeton. Everett imagined the quantum universe as an infinite assemblage of ordinary universes all existing simultaneously. He called the assemblage the multiverse.

The essence of quantum physics is unpredictability. At every instant, the objects in our physical environment—the atoms in our lungs and the light in our eyes—are making unpredictable choices, deciding what to do next. According to Everett and Deutsch, the multiverse contains a universe for every combination of choices. There are so many universes that every possible sequence of choices occurs in at least one of them. Each universe is constantly splitting into many alternative universes, and the alternatives are recombining when they arrive at the same final state by different routes. The multiverse is a huge network of possible histories diverging and reconverging as time goes on. The "quantum weirdness" that we observe in the behavior of atoms, the "spooky action at a distance" that Einstein famously disliked, is the result of universes recombining in unexpected ways.

According to Deutsch, each of us exists in the multiverse as a crowd of almost identical creatures, traveling together through time along closely related histories, splitting and recombining constantly like the atoms of which we are composed. He does not claim to have an answer to the question "Why does the multiverse exist?" or to the easier question "What is the nature of consciousness?" He sees ahead of us a long future of slow exploration, answering philosophical questions that we do not yet know how to ask. One of the questions that we know how to ask but not to answer is: "Does quantum computing play an essential role in our consciousness?" For Deutsch, the physics of quantum computing is the most promising clue that may lead us to a deeper understanding of our existence. He theorizes, Holt tells us, that "all the different parallel universes in the multiverse" could "be coaxed into collaborating on a single computation."

There are many other kinds of multiverse besides the Everett version. Multiverse models are fashionable in recent theories of cosmology. Holt went to see the Russian cosmologist Alex Vilenkin at Tufts University in Boston. Unlike Deutsch, Vilenkin has multiple universes disconnected and widely separated from each other. Each arises out of nothing by a process known as quantum tunneling, spontaneously crossing the barrier between nonexistence and existence with no expenditure of energy. Universes spring into existence with precisely zero total energy, the positive energy of matter being equal and opposite to the negative energy of gravitation. Mass comes free because energy is zero.

The title of the Vilenkin chapter is "The Ultimate Free Lunch?" Holt describes a conversation between the young physicist George Gamow and the old physicist Albert Einstein when both of them were in Princeton. Gamow, the original inventor of the idea of quantum tunneling, explained to Einstein the possibility of the free lunch. Einstein was so astonished that he stopped in the middle of the street and was almost run over by a car.

Opinions vary widely concerning the proper limits of science. For me, the multiverse is philosophy and not science. Science is about facts that can be tested and mysteries that can be explored, and I see no way of testing

hypotheses of the multiverse. Philosophy is about ideas that can be imagined and stories that can be told. I put narrow limits on science, but I recognize other sources of human wisdom going beyond science. Other sources of wisdom are literature, art, history, religion, and philosophy. The multiverse has its place in philosophy and in literature.

My favorite version of the multiverse is a story told by the philosopher Olaf Stapledon, who died in 1950. He taught philosophy at the University of Liverpool. In 1937 he published a novel, *Star Maker*, describing his vision of the multiverse. The book was marketed as science fiction, but it has more to do with theology than with science. The narrator has a vision in which he travels through space visiting alien civilizations from the past and the future, his mind merging telepathically with some of their inhabitants who join him on his journey. Finally, this "cosmical mind" encounters the Star Maker, an "eternal and absolute spirit" who has created all of these worlds in a succession of experiments. Each experiment is a universe, and as each experiment fails he learns how to design the next experiment a little better. His first experiment is a simple piece of music, a rhythmic drumbeat exploring the texture of time. After that come many more works of art, exploring the possibilities of space and time with gradually increasing complexity.

Our own universe comes somewhere in the middle, a big improvement on its predecessors but still destined for failure. Its flaws will bring it to a tragic end. Far outside the range of our understanding will be the later experiments, avoiding the mistakes that the Star Maker made with our own universe, and leading the way to ultimate perfection. Stapledon's multiverse, conceived in the shadow of the approaching horrors of World War II, is an imaginative attempt to grapple with the problem of good and evil.

For most of the twenty-five centuries since written history began, philosophers were important. Two groups of philosophers, Confucius and Lao Tse in China, and Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle in Greece, were dominant figures in the cultures of Asia and Europe for two thousand years. Confucius and Aristotle set the style of thinking for Eastern and Western civilizations. They not only spoke to scholars but also to rulers. They had a deep influence in the practical worlds of politics and morality as well as in the intellectual worlds of science and scholarship.

In more recent centuries, philosophers were still leaders of human destiny. Descartes and Montesquieu in France, Spinoza in Holland, Hobbes and Locke in England, Hegel and Nietzsche in Germany, set their stamp on the divergent styles of nations as nationalism became the driving force in the history of Europe. Through all the vicissitudes of history, from classical Greece and China until the end of the nineteenth century, philosophers were giants playing a dominant role in the kingdom of the mind.

Holt's philosophers belong to the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Compared with the giants of the past, they are a sorry bunch of dwarfs. They are thinking deep thoughts and giving scholarly lectures to academic audiences, but hardly anybody in the world outside is listening. They are historically insignificant. At some time toward the end of the nineteenth century, philosophers faded from public life. Like the snark in Lewis Carroll's poem, they suddenly and silently vanished. So far as the general public was concerned, philosophers became invisible.

The fading of philosophy came to my attention in 1979, when I was involved in the planning of a conference to celebrate the hundredth birthday of Einstein. The conference was held in Princeton, where Einstein had lived, and our largest meeting hall was too small for all the people who wanted to come. A committee was set up to decide who should be invited. When the membership of the committee was announced, there were loud protests from people who were excluded. After acrimonious discussions, we agreed to have three committees, each empowered to invite one third of the participants. One committee was for scientists, one for historians of science, and one for philosophers of science.

After the three committees had made their selections, we had three lists of names of people to be invited. I looked at the lists of names and was immediately struck by their disconnection. With a few exceptions, I knew personally all the people on the science list. On the history list, I knew the names, but I did not know the people personally. On the philosophy list, I did not even know the names.

In earlier centuries, scientists and historians and philosophers would have known one another. Newton and Locke were friends and colleagues in the English parliament of 1689, helping to establish constitutional government in England after the bloodless revolution of 1688. The bloody passions of the English Civil War were finally quieted by

establishing a constitutional monarchy with limited powers. Constitutional monarchy was a system of government invented by philosophers. But in the twentieth century, science and history and philosophy had become separate cultures. We were three groups of specialists, living in separate communities and rarely speaking to each other.

When and why did philosophy lose its bite? How did it become a toothless relic of past glories? These are the ugly questions that Jim Holt's book compels us to ask. Philosophers became insignificant when philosophy became a separate academic discipline, distinct from science and history and literature and religion. The great philosophers of the past covered all these disciplines. Until the nineteenth century, science was called natural philosophy and officially recognized as a branch of philosophy. The word "scientist" was invented by William Whewell, a nineteenth-century Cambridge philosopher who became master of Trinity College and put his name on the building where Wittgenstein and I were living in 1946. Whewell introduced the word in the year 1833. He was waging a deliberate campaign to establish science as a professional discipline distinct from philosophy.

Whewell's campaign succeeded. As a result, science grew to a dominant position in public life, and philosophy shrank. Philosophy shrank even further when it became detached from religion and from literature. The great philosophers of the past wrote literary masterpieces such as the Book of Job and the *Confessions* of Saint Augustine. The latest masterpieces written by a philosopher were probably Friedrich Nietzsche's *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* in 1885 and *Beyond Good and Evil* in 1886. Modern departments of philosophy have no place for the mystical.



<a href="#">20121019-01</a> 09:34 Pam	Re: The Search for Truth & Certainty (reply to SteveB, FotM Newsletter #251)
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The essay on Karl Popper is fascinating. I'd heard of him before, but it was nice to get his philosophy spelled out in clear and simple terms. I've always liked Thomas Kuhn's theory of "paradigm shift" too. It explains a lot. I think there was a paradigm shift when communism fell. Now it's the old geezers who cling to the "faith," and they'll all be gone soon, and communism will go the way of feudalism. Not everywhere, of course. Paradigm shifts are seldom global and not necessarily sudden. I believe we're in the midst of a paradigm shift of our own in this country. In my optimistic moments (few though they may be), I think we're moving toward a more completely scientific approach to "truth," which is made obvious by such comments as the one Michele Bachmann made about the HPV vaccine causing mental retardation. Even intelligent, educated people who have a faith of any kind,

whether it be religious, political, psychological, or sociological find it next to impossible to let it go. Evidence has basically nothing to do with it. As Popper points out, evidence can be found to support just about anything. What I would really like to see, knowing it to be impossible, is a greater tolerance of ambiguity and a willingness to suspend final judgment. We humans have a rage for answers. I do too. I get what I call "signs from the universe" all the time, or at least when I'm at some crisis point in my life. I realize this is wholly subjective, but the lizard part of my brain finds comfort and validation in these fortuitous coincidences. I've always liked the expression "go with the flow." Intransigence is our greatest enemy, and there's plenty of evidence for that.

[20121019-02](#) 13:51 Art Re: FotM Newsletter #250

Wanted to say congratulations on issue number 250. Quite a benchmark and quite an achievement. You are amazing! We all need to say thanks more often for all your efforts.

Very well done SIR!

[20121019-04](#) 14:05 Pam Re: FotM Newsletter #250

Hear! Hear! or is it Here! Here! Now that I think about it, I'm not sure. But Art is so right. SteveB has done something truly incredible, and he's been so consistent. It's a ton of work, I know, and we are all grateful!!

[20121019-03](#) 14:01 Pam Fw: Interesting Thoughts...

[Source of original email unknown, but the points ring true with me. --SteveB]

A little more than a decade ago:

- Greece was strong.
- Russia was bankrupt.
- Oil cost \$13 a barrel.
- AOL dominated the Internet.
- Smart economists thought the government would pay off the national debt by 2009.
- Apple (Nasdaq: AAPL ) was a joke.
- General Motors (NYSE: GM ) was at an all-time high.
- Mark Zuckerberg was in middle school.
- Y2K was a major worry.
- Fortune named Enron one of America's "most admired corporations."

The coming decade will be filled with just as many shifts. Learning to deal with them is more important than being able to predict them. Because no one -- no one -- will be able to predict them all.

[...some of those paradigm shifts Pam was talking about, above... --SteveB]

[20121019-05](#) 14:42 Ben Photo: Today's Seafood Lunch at Apple

So much great food; so little time! Alas!

I opted today for Chef Kelli's Bistro production of Idaho ruby trout with bourbon pecan sauce, served with roasted Brussels sprouts and sweet potato puree. I enjoyed this meal to a warm sun and a light breeze, on the patio with my fair-weather buddy Al Fresco.

It was... delicious. Freshwater fish like trout needs to be cooked, of course, so it is always a delight to be served a freshwater filet that has a golden, crispy skin, and moist, flaky, tender fish inside. You can get there by frying more easily; it's easy to imagine that a slender trout filet would be easy to overcook if the skin needs to end up crisp. Chef Kelli has that nailed down: this was just as it should be, every bite the size my fork peeled away, every bite with a tasty skin tag. Her sweet potato puree looked like mashed, but was utterly smooth and evenly textured, stiff enough to pick up just the amount one wants on a fork, yet decadently smooth and creamy. The Brussels sprouts, too, were right on the dot: the edges charred a bit, caramelized on the exposed surfaces, still with a great roasted-veggie texture. Chef Kelli's bourbon pecan sauce was smooth, rich, flavorful, and slightly sweet, and worked well to tie the sweet potatoes and golden trout together.



Chef Kelli's Ruby Trout with Bourbon Pecan Sauce, Brussels Sprouts, and Sweet Taters

[20121019-06](#) 15:19 Pam Election Fraud

I just read an article in Harper's magazine about the widespread election fraud that has been going on for the last decade. Not voter fraud. Election fraud. Steve B. is right; we should have paper ballots, and they should be hand counted. The problem is with the voting machines that have been rigged, to summarize a plethora of corruptions. The two or three (Diebold is one) makers of voting machines are owned by two brothers, who have colluded with Karl Rove and the Koch brothers to make sure our elections push the country further and further to the right, toward Rove's desired 40-yr. GOP dynasty.

We have been distracted by the voter ID question, when the real question has gone completely unremarked. We all know the Gore-Bush election was stolen--the article cites facts and figures--but so have a lot of others, not a few in Florida. No one wants to be accused of being a conspiracy nut, and it's very hard to talk about this without people looking for the tinfoil hat, but the problem is real and if we don't do something about it, we will lose our democracy. I do believe we are at a crisis point in our nation's history. Obama is correct. The differences between the two parties' vision of the future could not be more different. The GOP has determined that end ends justify the means, and their agenda proves it. It's up to we, the people, to do something about this, but I fear that the people are a bunch of misinformed fools. It's not just Obama who has to win; it's enough Democrats to restore some sanity to Congress who are crucial as well. I hated Nixon, but I didn't fear him as I do Cardinal Richlieu-Rove. It

wouldn't surprise me if the Republicans secretly want Obama to win, especially if they can keep control of Congress and gain control of the Senate. The U.S. will go to hell in a handbasket, people will blame Obama for the gridlock, and in their benighted disgust they will vote for Paul Ryan or whatever twisted capitalist is ascendent by the next election. You heard it here.

[20121020-02](#) 11:54 SteveB Re: Election Fraud (reply to Pam, above)

Ya, why would we risk our "freedom" by changing from paper ballots with a paper trail to anything else? Ever?

"Efficiency" trumps "security", "certainty", or freedom itself? Plus, somebody had to sell and buy all those untrustworthy computers... Why were they allowed to spend all that money just to make the country less democratic?

Weird! And not very conservative!

[20121020-01](#) 07:28 MarthaH Annenberg List of Lying Internet Rumors

The obvious subject of all the lies reflects, SADLY, our culture's state...

### [Don't Get Spun by Internet Rumors](#)

Just because you read it on somebody's blog or in an email from a friend or relative doesn't mean it's true. It's probably not, as we advised in our special report "[Is this chain e-mail true?](#)" back on March 18, 2008. On this page we feature a list of the false or misleading viral rumors we're asked about most often, and a brief summary of the facts. But click on the links to read the full articles. There is a lot more detail in each answer.

### [Has President Barack Obama signed 900 executive orders, some of which create martial law?](#)

No. Obama's executive orders do not create martial law. And so far he has signed 139 executive orders — not 900. Sept. 25, 2012

### [Did the government buy 79 percent of all vehicles sold by General Motors in June?](#)

No, that viral rumor is false. All fleet customers combined — including rental car companies and state and local governments — accounted for less than one-third of GM's June sales. Sept. 12, 2012

### [Are Obama's early records "sealed"?](#)

No. Many records that presidential candidates don't ordinarily release do remain confidential, but they are not "sealed" by a court. The 16 claims in a widely distributed graphic are mostly false or distorted. July 31, 2012

### [Does the Obama administration intend to "force gun control and a complete ban on all weapons for U.S. citizens" through a United Nations treaty?](#)

No. The administration plans to negotiate a treaty to regulate the international export and import of weapons. It says that it won't support any treaty that regulates the domestic transfer or ownership of weapons, or that infringes on the Second Amendment. June 27, 2012

### [Did Barack and Michelle Obama "surrender" their law licenses to avoid ethics charges?](#)

No. A court official confirms that no public disciplinary proceeding has ever been brought against either of them, contrary to a false Internet rumor. By voluntarily inactivating their licenses, they avoid a requirement to take continuing education classes and pay hundreds of dollars in annual fees. Both could practice law again if they chose to do so. June 14, 2012

[Is General Motors becoming 'China Motors' using taxpayer dollars?](#)

No. The restructured GM is still based in Detroit and is still one-third owned by the U.S. government. But it sells nearly as many cars in China as in the U.S. and has continued expanding operations there.

June 8, 2012

[Did President Obama secretly sign a law that makes it a crime to protest against him or ask him a question he doesn't like?](#)

No. He openly announced the signing of a bill overwhelmingly passed by Congress that slightly revises a 1971 law against trespassing into areas under Secret Service protection.

May 7, 2012

[Is the National Association of Realtors lobbying to repeal a 3.8 percent "sales tax" on homes before it takes effect in 2013?](#)

No. There's no such "sales tax" in the new health care law. And Medicare premiums aren't going to \$247 either. But these virulent falsehoods keep going around.

April 30, 2012

[Is "Obama's finance team" recommending a 1 percent tax on all bank transactions, as a chain e-mail claims?](#)

No. This idea was first floated in 2004 by one House member, who says it would replace the federal income tax and eliminate the national debt. So far it has gone nowhere.

Sept. 8, 2010, Updated: June 5, 2012

[Is there any truth in the e-mail claiming to give "a few highlights from the first 500 pages of the Healthcare bill"?](#)

Barely. We examined all 48 claims, finding 26 of them to be false and 18 to be misleading, only partly true or half true. Only four are accurate.

Aug. 28, 2009

[Are three former Fannie Mae executives "economic advisers" to Obama?](#)

No, claims made in a chain e-mail are false. Jim Johnson advised on non-economic matters but quit after a week. Franklin Raines says he took a "couple of calls" but was never an adviser. We find no evidence Tim Howard ever had a connection to the Obama campaign.

Oct. 9, 2008

[Will Muslim Americans be exempt from the mandate to have health insurance?](#)

The Muslim faith does not forbid purchasing health insurance, and no Muslim group has ever been considered exempt under the definitions used in the health care law.

May 20, 2010

[Is President Obama giving away several Alaskan islands to Russia?](#)

No. The U.S. has never claimed ownership of the islands identified in viral emails and websites. They lie far closer to the coast of Siberia than to Alaska.

March 27, 2012

[Is President Obama responsible for Chinese companies building U.S. bridges with stimulus money, as reported by ABC News?](#)

No. A viral email distorts an ABC News report. California officials hired a Chinese contractor and rejected federal money to avoid federal "Buy American" laws.

Feb. 17, 2012

[How much has the federal debt gone up under Obama?](#)

During his first three years in office, it rose \$4.7 trillion, an increase of 45 percent. Partisan graphics circulating via email and Facebook are both incorrect.

Feb. 2, 2012

[Did Obama issue a policy that "no U.S. serviceman can speak at any faith-based public event"?](#)

This claim in a chain e-mail is false. Army officials say there has been no change in policy regarding "faith-based" events. And the event the e-mail refers to wasn't a "faith-based" one.

June 10, 2009

[Does Obama plan to deny emergency brain surgery for patients over 70?](#)

No. A man claiming on a radio talk show to be a brain surgeon lied about that, and about a meeting of two associations of neurological surgeons, those associations say.

Jan. 5, 2012

[Is it true that members of Congress, their staffers and their family members do not have to pay back their student loans?](#)

Not true. Some congressional employees are eligible to have up to \$60,000 of student loans repaid after several years — just like other federal workers. But that's not the case for members of Congress or their families.

Jan. 6, 2011

[Did Obama order the military to drop the words "on behalf of the president of the United States" when presenting the flag to the next of kin at funerals?](#)

A chain email that makes that claim is wrong. Spokespersons for the Defense Department and the armed forces say that no change was ordered.

Oct. 10, 2011

[Does George Soros own the company buying many firms that make guns and ammunition?](#)

No. Contrary to a fanciful claim made in a viral email, the Freedom Group is not linked to the liberal billionaire. The National Rifle Association says the real owners are "strong supporters" of gun rights.

Oct. 21, 2011

[Did President Obama have his dog, Bo, flown to Maine in his own private jet for the family vacation?](#)

No. The family and staff took two small jets because the airport couldn't accommodate the usual presidential plane. Bo flew with several staffers.

Sept. 16, 2010

[Is it true that nobody remembers Obama attending Columbia University?](#)

At least one of his classmates remembers him well, and the university proudly claims Obama.

Feb. 16, 2010

[Was President Obama's tour bus made in Canada?](#)

The shell of the \$1.1 million bus came from Canada, but it was converted for the Secret Service by a company in Tennessee.

Aug. 25, 2011

[Is a chart claiming to show the "top 20 raises" to White House staffers accurate?](#)

It's misleading. The salary increases for 19 of the 21 employees listed resulted from promotions. Average pay for White House staff actually declined.

Aug. 4, 2011

[What about the "Congressional Reform Act of 2011"?](#)

A viral e-mail calls for fixing some abuses and excesses that don't exist, repeating misinformed claims that we've addressed before.

March 18, 2011

[Do statistics in a chain e-mail give an accurate "report card" of President Obama's first two years?](#)

Not exactly. The author made many minor mistakes and some major omissions in describing the terrible economic conditions he attributes to the president.

Feb. 25, 2011

[Does Illinois pay a grandmother \\$1,500 per month per child to be the foster parent to her eight grandchildren?](#)

No. State officials have no record of such a case, and state law would not allow it. This second-hand story spread by a Danville urologist isn't true.

Dec. 10, 2010

[Has President Obama canceled the May 6 National Day of Prayer?](#)

No. This widely circulated falsehood echoes similar claims made last year when the president issued a pro-prayer-day proclamation but didn't hold White House services as President Bush had done.

April 29, 2010

[Was Michelle Obama's brother's job saved with money from the stimulus act?](#)

This chain email is a hoax. It makes a ridiculously false claim about Craig Robinson, who is the head coach of Oregon State University's men's basketball team and the first lady's older brother.

March 22, 2010

[Did Obama loan \\$2 billion to Brazil's oil company to benefit China and George Soros?](#)

The president had nothing to do with the loan, which the Export-Import Bank approved for Brazil to buy U.S.-made equipment and services.

Sept. 18, 2009

[Is the ACLU suing to have cross-shaped headstones removed from military cemeteries?](#)

The ACLU has filed no such suit, and it hasn't sued to "end prayer from the military" either.

July 5, 2009

[Did Obama accuse veterans of "selfishness" and whining? Would he have forced them to "pay for their war injuries"?](#)

This chain e-mail contains fabricated quotes and misrepresents a budget idea that the White House scrapped.

May 12, 2009

[Has a "smoking gun" been found to prove Obama was not born a U.S. citizen? Did he attend Occidental College on a scholarship for foreign students?](#)

This chain e-mail is a transparent April Fools' Day hoax. It fabricates an AP news story about an nonexistent group, and makes false claims about Obama and the Fulbright program.

May 7, 2009

[Is Congress about to give Social Security to illegal immigrants?](#)

No. Congress hasn't voted on any measure to pay benefits to illegal immigrants, and has no plans for any such vote.

March 1, 2009

(This long-standing falsehood was bandied about back in 2006 and again during the 2008 presidential election.)

[Was Obama born in the U.S.A.?](#)

Yes. We give you the truth about Obama's birth certificate.

Aug. 21, 2008, Updated Nov. 1, 2008

[Is there a connection between FactCheck.org and Barack Obama or Bill Ayers?](#)

None, aside from benefiting at different times from the charity of the late publisher Walter Annenberg. We are a project of the Annenberg Public Policy Center of the University of Pennsylvania and get funding from the Annenberg Foundation, created by Walter Annenberg in 1989. Ayers was one of three Chicago educators who applied for a grant from the Annenberg Foundation in 1995, which was one of 5,200 grants the foundation made during its first 15 years. That \$49 million grant, plus additional funds raised locally, funded the Chicago Annenberg Challenge, which sought to improve Chicago public schools. Obama was selected by Chicago officials (not Ayers) to chair the board set up to administer Annenberg Challenge funds, and he headed it until 1999. FactCheck.org came into being in late 2003. For other details see our [Oct. 10, 2008](#), article about Obama and Ayers, which includes a sidebar:

"FactCheck.org and the 'Annenberg Challenge.'"

I particularly liked the 10-point list proving his...good character!?

Vote for...John Edwards!?

(Maybe this would be a good "sarcasm font" or "irony font"? Just end the sentence with: "!!?".)

Tom, it seems like *The Onion* is also endorsing guns to a big extent (or, at least, "the most extreme forms of violence."

*"The Onion* Endorses John Edwards for President" by *The Onion*

Oct. 19, 2012, (<http://www.theonion.com/articles/the-onion-endorses-john-edwards-for-president,29989/>)

(*The Onion* firmly believes John Edwards is the right man for the job.)

Choosing who should be entrusted to lead our nation's government is not a responsibility that should be taken lightly, and never has that maxim been truer than in this current election cycle. Our economy is stagnant, our culture is dangerously stratified, and our way of life is threatened by a host of dangers both foreign and domestic. In this newspaper's more than two centuries of covering the national scene, few moments in history have felt more crucial or, indeed, perilous.

And so the time has come to decide who is best equipped to lead our country through this era of great crisis and great opportunity. America needs a leader who offers a coherent vision and who appeals to the better angels of our nature. We need a leader who is well-versed in the moral and legal foundations of our freedom and will work to uphold them. In short, this country needs the best man for the job.

And so it is without ambivalence or hesitation that *The Onion* endorses former U.S. senator John Edwards for president.

Mr. Edwards' career has not been without its missteps. He has, like all of us at one time or another, made his share of mistakes. His opposition to a nationwide military draft, for instance. In addition, his support for the expansion of immigrants' rights has angered this newspaper's editorial board. And yet at each turn, Mr. Edwards has recovered in full, with two feet planted firmly on the ground and his dignity and political acumen intact. He is a man who has learned from adversity, knowing, as any former attorney does, that the strongest individuals are forged through trials by fire.

Furthermore, Mr. Edwards conducted a protracted extramarital affair with a younger woman while his wife was dying of cancer, and we like that he did this. Our reasons for liking that he did this are tenfold:

1. It was a brave thing to do, given the possible consequences.
2. The woman in question was more attractive than Mr. Edwards' wife.
3. He did what he did without compromising his ideals, at least not to any illegal extent.
4. He enjoyed himself, and good for him.
5. *The Onion* believes sex is a natural and healthy biological function.
6. Women have a weakness for men in powerful positions, and Mr. Edwards expertly exploited that weakness.

7. Mr. Edwards' "Two Americas" premise is very appealing.
8. Again, his wife was dying of cancer, and thus was not an ideal partner for sexual intercourse.
9. Mr. Edwards is attractive, and it is pleasing to imagine him having sexual intercourse with another attractive person.
10. Every employee of this newspaper would have done the exact same thing, given the opportunity.

Those who oppose John Edwards' rightful ascent to our nation's highest office are, in no uncertain terms, cowards and hypocrites.

They are also fools.

Those who disagree with our editorial board on this issue have neither our respect nor our tolerance. Furthermore, let it be known that the political endorsement of *The Onion* is not a thing to be taken lightly. On the contrary, it should be viewed as a sort of line in the proverbial sand, and those who find themselves on the wrong side of that line will henceforth be marked as enemies of this newspaper, and will be taken out with the most extreme forms of violence.

Now, consider for a moment what you, the reader, would be up against should you decide to defy *The Onion*. You would be pitting yourself against a multinational conglomerate whose yearly earnings exceed \$200 billion. On top of that, you would also be taking on a media organization with nearly limitless control over information and public opinion. Pretend, if you must, that we live in a representative democracy, but the reality is that the planet is controlled by the makers of money and the makers of taste, and *The Onion* is both.

*The Onion* has had its fair share of political enemies in the past, but rest assured few have survived to tell the tale.

And so the editorial board of *The Onion* asks you to keep these points in mind as you enter the voting booth on Election Day. We urge you to elect John Edwards the next president of the United States. The consequences of doing otherwise are simply too dire.

*Tu Stultus Es*

<a href="#">20121020-04</a>	17:46	Pam	Re: " <i>The Onion</i> Endorses John Edwards for President" (reply to SteveB, above)
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North Carolina's favorite son!

<a href="#">20121020-05</a>	18:17	SteveB	Re: " <i>The Onion</i> Endorses John Edwards for President" (reply to Pam, above)
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Did you mean...

North Carolina's favorite son!?

<a href="#">20121021-01</a>	10:22	Pam	Re: " <i>The Onion</i> Endorses John Edwards for President" (reply to SteveB, above)
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Exactly!?

<a href="#">20121021-02</a>	12:14	SteveB	Re: " <i>The Onion</i> Endorses John Edwards for President" (reply to Pam, above)
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What??? ;-)

20121021-03	12:27	SteveB	"The New Pot Barons"
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I always thought conservative Republicans should, by rights, be for marijuana legalization so they could get more stoned voters into the polling booths. That would have to be a boost, eh?

"The New Pot Barons" by Tony Dokoupil, The Daily Beast

Oct. 22, 2012, (<http://www.thedailybeast.com/newsweek/2012/10/21/will-pot-barons-cash-in-on-legalization.html>)

(Pot use in the United States is rising sharply, and voters may make it fully legal in two states this fall. Smart businessmen are banking on that happening.)

Full dark in downtown Denver, and inside one of the twinkling high-rises that make the skyline, drug dealers are putting money into envelopes. They're trying to be discreet. No one signed the security logbook in the lobby. All assume the room could be bugged. But if your image of the drug trade involves armed gangs or young men in parked cars, these dealers offer a surreal counterpoint. There's a finance veteran, two children of the Ivy League, multiple lawyers, and the son of a police chief. At their side is a Pulitzer Prize-winning communications consultant, two state lobbyists, and a nationally known political operative. And the guest of honor: a state senator who likes the look of those envelopes being stuffed.

"What's the maximum contribution?" one of the dealers asks. "Do you take cash?" wonders another. A third man breaks into a smile. "You better," he says, eyebrows dancing, "because the banks don't like doing business with us." Laughter fills the room as the envelopes are passed forward and slipped into a briefcase. "Huge thank you, everyone," the politician says, guiding the conversation back to the next legislative session and the kinds of legal changes this group would like to see. Here again, it's not what you'd expect: there's talk of a youth drug-abuse-prevention program and a bill to define "drugged" driving. When the politician finally rises to leave, after more than an hour, the dealers, in their pressed shirts and suit jackets, clap heartily. The average participant looks to be about 35, white and male, and on good terms with a barber. "Thank you," the politician says, bowing slightly. "Thank you for what you do."

What they do is sell marijuana. And not on street corners. Colorado is the developed world's only regulated for-profit cannabis market, and sales—to the 100,000 residents who have a thumbs up from their M.D.s—are closing in on \$200 million this year, a sum that generates tens of millions of dollars in local, state, and federal taxes. (Yes, the IRS taxes marijuana operations, even as the Justice Department attempts to shut them down.) Colorado is not the world's only experiment in free-market pot, but it's the most sophisticated, pushing beyond the Netherlands' confusing ban on wholesale and California's hazy nonprofit status. Denver's former city attorney has called it California "on steroids."

While the cannabis market remains illegal under federal law, attitudes are changing quickly, and it's that fact that the Colorado growers are banking on. The number of regular pot users is up by 3 million in the past five years, and the rate of high-school experimentation is at a 30-year high. When a kid first lights up at about age 16, it's usually not with a cigarette. Twelve states now treat a personal stash like a minor traffic offense, 17 allow medical marijuana, and this Election Day, if current polls hold, voters in Washington State and Colorado will vote to legalize marijuana—not for medical purposes but, as *Rolling Stone* recently enthused, "for getting-high purposes."

That would close out a 40-year fight launched by boomers and carried through by a big tent of talented reformers, growing bigger all the time. "Weed is the new gay," says Ted Trimpa, a Democratic strategist who helped engineer Colorado's flip from red state to blue. He's now focused on marijuana reform. But what I saw in Colorado was something altogether new: self-described "social entrepreneurs," the Sergey Brins and Mark Zuckerbergs of the Green Rush. They could have done almost anything with their lives—"my brother is a physician" is the kind of thing

one hears from them—but they chose to enter the pot business because they see it as a boom market, miracle cure, and social movement decades in the making and suddenly, thrillingly, near.

“This is our Facebook,” says one of my hosts, Norton Arbelaez, the owner of two dispensaries and a commercial grow. “This is the same kind of environment, the same kind of setting, and the same kind of people.” He was a founding member of the Medical Marijuana Industry Group (MMIG), a powerful young lobby that’s buried the age of drum-circle activism and instead strives to partner with law enforcement and politicians. It was their board meeting in the high-rise downtown, a weekly gathering two blocks from the Capitol dome. And it is their goal to dress legal pot in a style as conservative as their own.

That’s why they offered Newsweek unprecedented access. While the organization is officially neutral on legalization, many of its members privately support it and believe their example demonstrates that the drug most of the world knows as “herbal cannabis” can be regulated, taxed, and safely sold. “This is a botanical blockbuster,” says Arbelaez, with a half-ironic flourish. That is, if it’s not shut down by the federal government before the lobby can win mainstream acceptance. “We’re the tortoise, not the hare,” says Arbelaez. “But the tortoise wins, eventually.”

Heading West toward the Rocky Mountains, Denver rises like a city in a snow globe, but before you reach the exits for downtown, there’s a stark industrial ring, a hard-hat zone of freight trains, heavy equipment, and all-purpose warehouse space. This is home to Colorado’s pot business, housed in at least a million square feet—more than all the office space in the city’s tallest skyscraper. Over the course of two bright, warm days this month, accompanied by members of MMIG’s self-described “nerd herd” of pot entrepreneurs, I toured three of these warehouses.

They are each as boring as a soundstage until the moment one actually sees the plants. One second you’re in the gray, empty cold of a warehouse, your mind hypnotized by the dull hum of electricity. The next you’re standing in a perfect simulacrum of summer sunshine with hundreds of gorgeous green plants gently waving, stirred by fans and soothed by classical music (or energized by hard rock, depending on what the master grower says the plant “likes”).

It’s always harvest time in some of these rooms. Always processing time in others. A magic garden with no sun or bugs. Old-school American pot, smuggled in by boat or plane, was dirty: doused in ocean spray, soaked in fuel, or infested with spiders. This is a beautiful, and explicitly professional, product: hundreds of acorn-size buds flecked with crystals of THC, the chemical without which these plants might as well be ferns.

“Look at this fat boy,” says Arbelaez, cupping the flowering buds of a short, stocky plant. “Ain’t that beautiful?” I nodded. His whole operation had an aesthetic to it, with different seasons being replicated inside different rooms and a team of growers acting as botanical gods: thanks to sensors in each growing room, if the conditions slip, the plant minders get a text message.

But the most impressive space was the one in sync with the natural world, a stand of marijuana plants fed by natural light through the roof, the pot leaves looming up overhead, casting shadows. Arbelaez appears over my shoulder. “What are you writing down?” he asks. I show him the page. “BIG TREES,” it says, and he laughs, bending down to wrap his hand around a three- or four-inch trunk. “That is a tree, bro.”

Arbelaez came to Colorado with Jon Salfeld, a friend from Tulane Law School. The two are a bit of an odd couple. Arbelaez is tall, olive-skinned, and voluble. The son of a General Motors assembly-line worker, he went to the University of Oklahoma on scholarship and came out comfortable in a suit. Salfeld is shorter and more soft-spoken. The son of a lawyer, he went to Cornell—by way of Manhattan—and came out with hair to his collar. Walking around Denver with them, with Salfeld’s eyes on his BlackBerry and Arbelaez’s on everything else, sometimes felt like a night out with a tour manager and his talent.

But there’s no doubt they have a bond. After meeting at Tulane, they recognized a shared enthusiasm for marijuana, and after graduation in 2006, they roomed together, working uninspiring jobs in medical malpractice and real estate. Then the economy collapsed. Salfeld lost his job. And in the hands-on-head discussions of what opportunities might emerge, Arbelaez suggested pot in Colorado. “I didn’t even know if was legal out there,” says Salfeld. They researched it and found a compelling case: good weather, a pot-friendly population, and a strong legal footing.

They arrived in the summer of 2009, just a few weeks before an Obama administration memo steered law enforcement away from medical marijuana shops in “unambiguous compliance” with state laws. Overnight thousands of people galloped into business. Colorado soon had more pot shops than Starbucks, and a two-mile stretch of Broadway became a thicket of smoke-in-your-face entrepreneurs. Bikini girls hawked \$5 joints, bums in sandwich boards advertised two-for-one ounces, and former black-market dealers reportedly dragged their trash bags of weed into the light.

It was as troubling a scene as Arbelaez and Salfeld could imagine. Unless legal weed was done properly—with rules and regulations and clean-shaven owners in suits—they knew the effort was doomed. So they joined up with other marijuana entrepreneurs to help pass Bill 1284: a controversial, seed-to-sale framework for controlling the industry. It banned felons and in many cases put up six-figure barriers to entry. The licensing alone cost as much as \$18,000, necessary to help fund a special-enforcement division. As much as half the industry was wiped out by the new rules. Salfeld even lost a store, deemed too close to another that predated his. But it was all necessary. As even law-enforcement officials admit, it created the basis for safe and limited legal weed in America.

Owner operators like Salfeld and Arbelaez are now working hard to uphold those standards, each pouring more than a million dollars into their operations, much of it compliance-related. “There’s no bulls--t,” says Arbelaez. In the grow houses, there are security cameras, inventory reports, and detailed delivery systems accounting for every gram of pot, from every plant, all accessible to Colorado authorities 24 hours a day. Their biggest concern in agreeing to this article was an almost genteel respect for law enforcement. “We’re about transparency,” says Arbelaez. “We’re about trust.”

But there’s only so much the industry can do to legitimize itself right now. Every morning outside the unmarked bottling factory, home to Dixie Elixirs, America’s first multistate cannabis-infused-soda maker, men in suits hold the door for 20-somethings in spider-web-patterned skullcaps and sweatpants. I met Salfeld’s highest-paid employee, his master grower, Joe, wearing flannel pajama pants and a “420 Weed” T-shirt, as he threw out a doughnut box. Arbelaez’s careful tour was interrupted by the arrival of one of his trimmers, the wizard-bearded host of a Web show called “Tokin.” All the best talent is de facto, developed in violation of federal law.

And this tension between the shadowy roots of pot and the direct light of legalization pervades the industry, which employs more than 4,000 people in Colorado, hundreds of them in six-figure jobs. At River Rock, Arbelaez’s two-store operation, and Local Product of Colorado, Salfeld’s upmarket boutique, more than 100 people are on staff. Fleets of contractors collecting checks cycle through, along with gardening wholesalers, business consultants, and software developers. The whole state has been buoyed by marijuana sales without evident decay.

But because Arbelaez and Salfeld, and the rest of the industry, are technically felonious under federal law, they struggle for basic business services. Banks and landlords hesitate to take their money. They can’t get traditional loans, or insurance, or health coverage. Credit-card companies won’t process transactions in their stores. Judges won’t enforce their contracts. The IRS forbids normal business deductions, bankrupting many operations. But that’s the only deduction allowed. “Not a whole lot of money is being made,” says Arbelaez. “We’ve all had sleepless nights,” adds Salfeld. “We’ve all had scares.”

This in-between nature of the business is present in the very product, too. Does medicinal pot help people? Absolutely. It eases pain and nausea, generates appetite, encourages sleep, and generally comforts the seriously afflicted. Yet it’s also a euphoric drug that parks itself in a part of the brain named after the Sanskrit word for “bliss.” It’s both—a medicine you like to take—which is why some patients with pot prescriptions have cancer or glaucoma, but others are young to middle-aged men with vague complaints of pain. “Skateboarders with bruises,” is the running aside from critics.

The prescribing of medical marijuana is also a bit of a slapstick routine. Oh, you have cancer? Try this wonder medicine called Pineapple Grenade or Alien Dog or Face Wreck. Oh, you have a doctor’s recommendation? Try smoking this dab of hash with a butane torch, some foil, and what looks like a crack pipe. And then there are the festivals, so-called cannabis cups that blend the sobriety of a bar crawl with the crowd behavior of the Adult Video News awards, all doctor-approved. Sometimes there’s even a doctor on site writing scrips. “It can be very, very annoying,” says Salfeld of these more antisocial aspects of his market. But just inside the door of his flagship store, two blocks from the Denver Art Museum, is a five-foot-tall bonglike trophy: an industry award for “patient” care.

The future can be perhaps be glimpsed in what's locally described as the biggest dispensary business in Colorado, a chain of MMIG-supported stores called the Clinic. It does an admirable job of trying to blend the medicine and lifestyle ends of the business. "Our patients live better" is its tagline, which one imagines being cut to just "Live better" if legalization passes. The Clinic has a presence at the festivals, but it's also expanding in an upscale direction that's reminiscent of liquor. Earlier this year it debuted Reserva Privada, a new strain of smokable bud branded like a faux-old style of rum or bourbon—it's not the Purple Kush of dorm block 12. Meanwhile, it's no coincidence that Salfeld's and Arbelaez's companies use brand names (Local Product, River Rock) that could work for any upscale, bourgeois bohemian product. The names can grow, in other words.

And ultimately that might be the biggest concern to have about Colorado's cannabis market: its growth. Even as they curtsy to law and politics, the new moguls of pot revel in their historic role, talking like the future subjects of a Ken Burns-style documentary, the pioneers who emerged from a dysfunctional prohibition. One framed the federal letter warning him that his store was too close to a school. Others brighten as they describe the signs of DEA surveillance—the clicks on the phone, unmarked vans in the lane.

They say that even if legalization passes in state, they'll respect the federal law and focus on "patients." But they also know big money awaits on the other side: at least 10 times the available market, an extra billion dollars in potential revenue. "I think we all saw dollar signs in our eyes," admits one board member, describing his entry into the business. "The horizon is bright," says another. Tripp Keber, owner of Dixie Elixirs, the marijuana-infused-soda company, is the most openly avaricious. He's in his 40s and wealthy, with two homes in Aspen, a preteen daughter, and less idealism than a younger man. "I make companies to sell companies," he says, a blue-faced Rolex on his wrist. "Make me an offer, and I'll ride off into the sunlight with saddlebags of gold."

He's not just blowing smoke when he talks about selling out to the highest bidder. It's already widely rumored that Philip Morris has leased warehouse space in the area. The company denies it, as do its top-tier competitors, but "I've heard a lot of talk about it," says Keith Burdick, a partner at Xcalibur, one of the biggest independent generic-brand tobacco companies in the country. "You're going to get cigarette companies in here. I'm sure of it," says John Wickens, a real-estate agent who has sold or leased acres of commercial space to marijuana growers. Peter Bourne, the drug czar under Jimmy Carter, recently told Newsweek that tobacco executives shared their marijuana contingency plans with him.

The alcohol and tobacco industries traditionally get 80 percent of their profits from heavy users, and there's every reason to believe that marijuana sellers will need the same ratio. That would mean Colorado's burgeoning pot business could be the basis for a third huge, blood-sucking vice industry, dependent on converting kids and supporting heavy users. "No way," says Arbelaez, when I raised this possibility with him. He talked passionately about medicine, and social progress, and it was moving, convincing stuff. "These people have families, and they employ families. They're about helping people, not hurting people," he said of his peers.

I want to believe him, but something happened after the board meeting. About eight of us went out for a drink. I found myself not in one of Denver's dive bars, but the Churchill Bar, a smoking club inside the city's poshest hotel, the Brown Palace. There, as a Bond-girl waitress delivered round after round of top-shelf conviviality and an electronic joint prototype appeared, it was easy to see my hosts 30 years from now, when legalization is here, sitting in the same wozy affluence—fatter, balder, and famously rich.

Appreciating the city in a convertible...



At the stadium supporting the team...





<http://estilodevida.latam.msn.com/las-mejores-playas-del-mundo#image=12>



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

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## FRIENDS OF THE MIDDLE NEWSLETTER #253 — OCT. 23, 2012

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

**INDEX: Click here.**

### **Now We Await the Election**

(posted by Steven W. Baker / SteveB, Oct. 23, 2012)

The debates are now history as we head into the stretch...finally! President Obama apparently won this last contest on points, but his inexplicable rope-a-dope in Denver is still probably the most significant moment in the entire campaign.

"Mitt's Disappearing Act" by Steve Kornacki, Salon

Oct. 22, 2012, ([http://www.salon.com/2012/10/23/mitts\\_disappearing\\_act/](http://www.salon.com/2012/10/23/mitts_disappearing_act/))



(The GOP nominee knew there was no way for him to win the foreign policy debate, and it really showed.)

The good news for Barack Obama is that Monday night's debate went better for him than the other two. The bad news is that it figures to have the least impact on Election Day.

Three weeks ago in Denver, the president was practically comatose, while Mitt Romney was glib and confident in a way many viewers hadn't seen before. Last week, Obama bounced back and turned in an impressively punchy performance, but Romney held his own (except for his awful Libya flub) and scored some real points on the economy. On Monday, Obama showed up with some strong material, challenged his opponent persistently, and was met with surprisingly little resistance from Romney.

That Romney was playing it safe became clear moments into the debate, when he took Bob Schieffer's lead-off question about Libya and immediately sought to broaden it out, launching into a discussion about Egypt and the Arab Spring. He also complimented Obama on ordering the bin Laden raid, but then added that "we can't kill our way out of this mess." Obviously, Romney had no interest in a repeat of last week, when his assertion that Obama had waited two weeks to call the attack on the Benghazi consulate a terrorist act blew up in his face. This time, Romney seemed content to run out the clock.

And it went that way for most of the night. Sure, Romney repeated some of his standard attacks on Obama's foreign policy leadership, branding him insufficiently concerned about Israel and even dredging up the "apology tour" nonsense. And when he could, he tried to pivot away from foreign policy and to remind voters about the fragile state of the domestic economy. But Romney wasn't eager to engage Obama on many specific points, or to offer a significantly different vision of America's role in the world. He agreed with Obama on drones, on Afghanistan and even on Syria, acknowledging that besides calling for the arming of rebels he doesn't have a different course of action in mind.

I think three factors contributed to this. The first is that Romney and his team recognized that foreign policy isn't their strong suit in this election. His campaign strategy depends on economically anxious voters turning on Obama; there's just not much room for foreign policy and national security in this equation – and it shows in how little effort Romney and his party have put into defining their international agenda. This was going to be a tough debate for Romney to win, no matter what.

He was further hindered by the neocon pronouncements he made en route to the GOP nomination, and the strong neocon bent of his foreign policy team. Voters are no more eager to return to Bush-era international policies than they are Bush-era domestic policies, and Romney plainly understood that, so he reined in the hawkishness. But he wasn't about to attack Obama from the left either, so this left Romney with little to say at times.

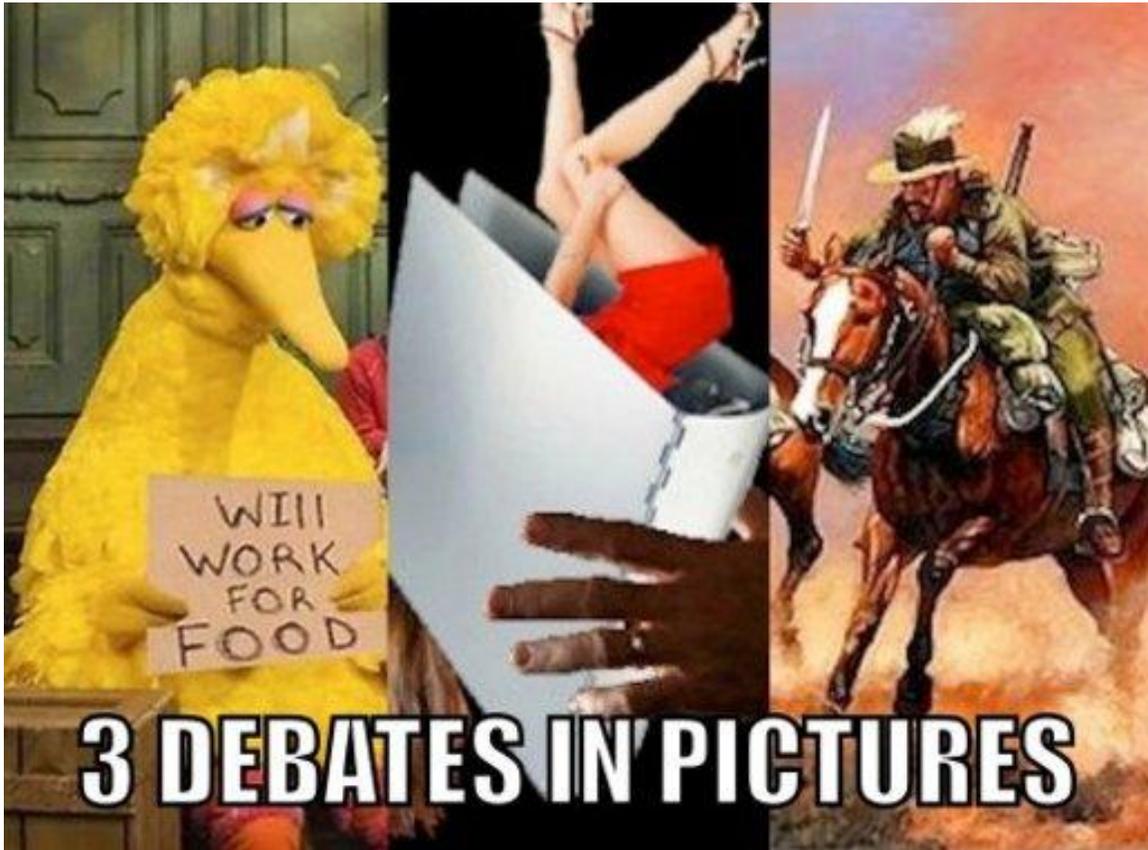
He also may have been spooked by what happened at Hofstra last week, which marked the second time he'd made a political mess for himself with Benghazi. Maybe the Romney camp concluded that it just wasn't worth the risk of going down that road again.

The result is that some of Obama's best attributes were able to shine. He was in command of the facts, ably deflected Romney's attacks (particularly on the apology tour business, when Obama pointed out that like Romney he'd gone to Israel as a candidate, but that he hadn't taken donors or fundraisers with him), and seemed more presidential than he did in the first two debates. There seemed to be a stature gap at the table.

The early returns are encouraging for Obama. A CBS News insta-poll of undecided voters found that 53 percent judged him the winner, compared to just 23 percent for Romney. In that same poll last week, Obama's edge was just 7 points, and in Denver he was blown out by 24. If the Obama we've seen in the last two debates had shown up in Denver, this race might not be as tight as it now is.

The problem for Obama is that Monday's debate will probably have the smallest audience of all of them. And even if voters were more impressed with him than Romney, this remains an election that's fundamentally about the economy. Nor was there a particularly dramatic or memorable moment that will live on for the rest of the race. Obama delivered a few funny lines ("Well, Governor, we also have fewer horses and bayonets"), but there was no Romney meltdown.

In the best case for Obama, his strong performance offers a crucial bit of reassurance to voters who like him and were leaning toward voting for him before Denver. Perhaps this, coupled with his showing last week, will provide these voters with the motivation they need to troop to the polls for him. The worst case for Obama is that Monday night won't matter at all – and given where the race stands, that wouldn't necessarily be bad for him.



20121022-01 06:09 SteveB Fw: For Your Attention

This one seems like it's got to be legit to me!?

From the desk of:  
AL-Hassan Yazid  
Contract Review Panel  
Ministry of Finance  
Iraq,

Dear Sir / Madam,

I am Al-Hassan Yazid of the Contract Review Panel of the Ministry of Finance, Iraq.

After the demise of the Americans from Iraq, we have decided to rebuild our country.

My intension of writing you this letter is to seek your permission to invite you into a deal that will mutually benefit you and I without any risk involved, knowing fully well that everything will be done in a legal manner. You and I have this once in a life time oppurtunity to share the sum of US\$27Million at the ratio of 50:50.

I will tell you more details when I hear from you.

Al-Hassan Yazid.

20121022-02 10:13 Pam Re: 'Where Do We Come From, Grandpa?' (reply to SteveB, FotM Newsletter #252)

I haven't read the articles yet, but what you say here is beautiful, Steve. As is your family. I'm so glad you posted pictures of them. Your daughters are gorgeous, your grandchildren adorable, and their granddad a good, wise man. I think this is a wonderful message to send to a new granddaughter, and I know that when she's old enough she'll cherish it.

20121022-09 14:31 Pam Re: 'Where Do We Come From, Grandpa?' (reply to SteveB, FotM Newsletter #252)

"For if God does not exist, then what is the foundation for moral values? More particularly, what is the basis for the value of human beings? If God does not exist, then it is difficult to see any reason to think that human beings are special or that their morality is objectively valid."

This is one of my "favorite" arguments for the existence of God. Why should we think that humans are special? In this whole, vast universe, why would this crawling, snarling conglomeration of creatures (us) mean anything more than a drop in the ocean? We're special to ourselves, but that's something entirely different. I happen to think humans are fairly intelligent--some of them--and can figure out ways to live on their own. Some ways are better than others, at least to my way of thinking, but if humans aren't perfect--and they're not--then they are bound to make mistakes and false starts. God has nothing to do with it, and doesn't have to. I actually think it's more to man's credit that he has developed morality(ies) in the absence of a controlling force. In a sense, we have created something from nothing: morality from the anarchy of nature. Relying on God for one's morality is like being a child relying on your parents to tell you what to do. It corrodes autonomy. Dostoyevsky asked whether if God does not exist, does that mean anything is permissible? Anything is possible. It is human, not divine, conscience that prompts us to do good rather than evil. When evil intrudes, it means there has been a human failure, and this is only on our terms. Objectively, the beings on distant planets (if there are any) might have a very different notion of what constitutes good and evil. We'll never know. All these arguments about the existence of God mean little to me in the end. Absent empirical proof, no one can say for sure what the Truth is, so when it comes to belief, I'd

say it's every man for himself--so long as what you believe doesn't imperil others. Since I haven't a clue what the truth of the cosmos is, I don't think it matters very much what individuals believe. Trying to argue someone into or out of religious belief is a pointless act, like trying to argue someone into liking opera.

20121022-10 15:32 SteveB Re: 'Where Do We Come From, Grandpa?' (reply to Pam, above)

Yet maybe there is progress to be made here...

I agree with you about morality and I guess that's much of what humanism is about...so, yes, the problem of morality doesn't have to have anything to do with God...

The first author is obviously a little too immersed in Christianity...and he likes to set up straw dogs.

Just as we can have morality without God, so too can gratuitous evil exist in the presence of God. Whenever the religious man starts to know the mind of God, he gets into trouble. So I think, with you, that, with or without God, both evil and morality may thrive. And it seems as if we are left alone to decide which is which.

But then Plato sometimes out-Plato'd himself...

Pam: "Trying to argue someone into or out of religious belief is a pointless act, like trying to argue someone into liking opera."

I know what you mean, yet I see the Mormon missionaries busy as bees, even here in Bolivia...obviously saving souls everywhere they go. How do they do that? The Book of Mormon is absolutely CRAZY!

20121022-13 19:33 Pam Re: 'Where Do We Come From, Grandpa?' (reply to SteveB, above)

What you said in your message to your granddaughter made more sense than those other arguments. Believe this, or believe that, at the end of the day, what difference does it really make? That's why I never understand why people are so eager to try to convert others. If God is so inscrutable, then how do you figure you know the truth? Are you so special that you have special knowledge that is denied others? It's the "I'm right and you're wrong" mentality that drives me around the bend.

20121022-03 12:17 Tom Video: "Obama Kept Us Safe"

Remember, being in Solitary confinement in a Prison, could also keep you 'Safe!'

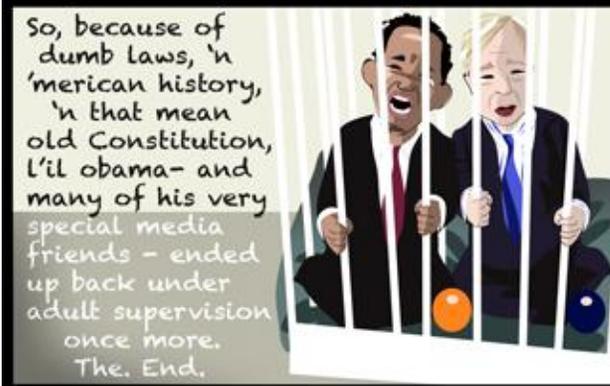
<http://youtu.be/gAG19uO6Og8>





Once upon a time, Americans elected a lightbringer, who promised toys, 'n unicorns, rainbows, 'n good things for all the boys 'n girls who would vote for him!

To do this, L'il obama threw out a mean old Constitution, and children just like him everywhere cheered, 'cause now THEY were in charge!



[20121022-06](#) 13:23 Tom Video: Space Shuttle *Endeavor's* Trek Across L.A.

Time-lapse video: Space shuttle *Endeavour's* trek across L.A

This is memorable..... enjoy!

<http://framework.latimes.com/2012/10/15/time-lapse-video-space-shuttle-endeavours-trek-across-l-a/>

[20121022-07](#) 13:27 Tom Graphic: Anti-Obama #1



[20121022-08](#) 13:35 Tom Fw: "Ghosts of War: Artist Superimposes World War II Photographs on to Modern Pictures of the Same Street Scenes"

from RandyG:

"Ghosts of War: Artist Superimposes World War II Photographs on to Modern Pictures of the Same Street Scenes"  
by Emma Reynolds, TidyRead

Oct. 18, 2012,

[http://www.tidyread.com/td/index.php?r=site/read&xml=eNpNzs1KAzEQXDDgdynUy5DUblV0S5FelH2ChiVsRhNMNmFm1tC3d9pFKYQJmb8v3O\\_un\\_pVEKn9ZiPRnwmtdt2PJ\\_4-Pn87WUF9nSodL33p3XFx3b3paa9a7mM5Zg47Y-VuzEzbWy5HEMaHpuu3L4\\_ODZt5DYWHTHJmjFlkMzxUp5loY2ZwKJW9OWh0GU0OR8kWuBja5eKTJ1DjKTNRiQog6POKEbIPkdFwnURieFlwylwnqKG\\_hIWBWwauDCgDw1wwNwyUCaTAgSefdIkMAYFd1nCFYYFX-1\\_Z4HHU&id=1846513](http://www.tidyread.com/td/index.php?r=site/read&xml=eNpNzs1KAzEQXDDgdynUy5DUblV0S5FelH2ChiVsRhNMNmFm1tC3d9pFKYQJmb8v3O_un_pVEKn9ZiPRnwmtdt2PJ_4-Pn87WUF9nSodL33p3XFx3b3paa9a7mM5Zg47Y-VuzEzbWy5HEMaHpuu3L4_ODZt5DYWHTHJmjFlkMzxUp5loY2ZwKJW9OWh0GU0OR8kWuBja5eKTJ1DjKTNRiQog6POKEbIPkdFwnURieFlwylwnqKG_hIWBWwauDCgDw1wwNwyUCaTAgSefdIkMAYFd1nCFYYFX-1_Z4HHU&id=1846513)

This haunting collection of images shows what it would look like if the ghosts of World War II returned to our streets.

The remarkable pictures overlay modern scenes from France with atmospheric photographs taken in the same place during the war.

Historical expert Jo Teeuwisse, from Amsterdam, began the project after finding 300 old negatives at a flea market in her home city depicting familiar places in a very different context.

[Just one sample of many fascinating images... --SteveB]



Dangerous crossing: Soldiers race up Avenue de Paris in Cherbourg in 1944, speeding past the rubble and over modern-day road markings



Fear and fighting: The original image from 1944, before it was laid over a photo taken from the exact same spot today



Startling contrast: Dutch historian Jo Teeuwisse finds pictures from archives and then researches their background, before taking a picture in the same place now and elegantly interweaving them.

[20121022-11](#) 16:05 Ben Re: "Ghosts of War..." (reply to Tom, above)

Wow! This is really cool: very powerful; art applied to history. Or is it history applied to art?

[20121022-12](#) 19:24 SteveB "LiquidPiston Unveils 40-BHP X2 Rotary Engine with 75 Percent Thermal Efficiency"

"LiquidPiston Unveils 40-BHP X2 Rotary Engine with 75 Percent Thermal Efficiency" by David Szondy, Gizmag

Oct. 21, 2012, (<http://www.gizmag.com/liquidpistol-rotary/24623/>)

The internal combustion engine (ICE) has had a remarkably successful century and a half. Unfortunately, it's notoriously inefficient, wasting anywhere from 30 to 99 percent of the energy it produces and spewing unburned fuel into the air. Last week, Gizmag interviewed Dr. Alexander Shkolnik, President and CEO of LiquidPiston, Inc. about the company's LiquidPiston X2 – a 40-bhp rotary engine that burns a variety of fuels and requires no valves, cooling systems, radiators or mufflers, yet promises a thermodynamic efficiency of 75 percent.

Co-founder of LiquidPiston with his father Nikolay, Dr. Shkolnik believes that the internal combustion engine is at the end of its development cycle. According to Shkolnik, after 150 years the ICE has made as many incremental improvements as it can. Many varieties of ICE, such as the Otto cycle used by petrol engines and the Diesel cycle, have had their successful points, but all fall short of being as efficient as they could be. Even what seem like very efficient engines, like the diesel, aren't as good as they might appear.

"Everyone would say at first glance that the diesel engine is more efficient (than the petrol engine). The truth is that if you had both engines at the same compression ratio, the spark-ignited engine has a faster combustion process and a more efficient process. In practice, it's limited to a lower compression ratio otherwise you get spontaneous ignition."

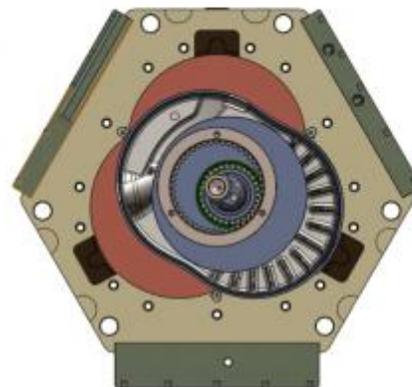


LiquidPiston's approach to the problem was to go back to the basics of thermodynamics and work forward to develop what Shkolnik calls the "High Efficiency Hybrid Cycle" (HEHC), which combines the features of the Otto, Diesel, Rankine, and Atkinson cycles.



Wankel Engine

- Low Compression ratio
- No constant-volume combustion
- No over-expansion



LPI X1 Engine

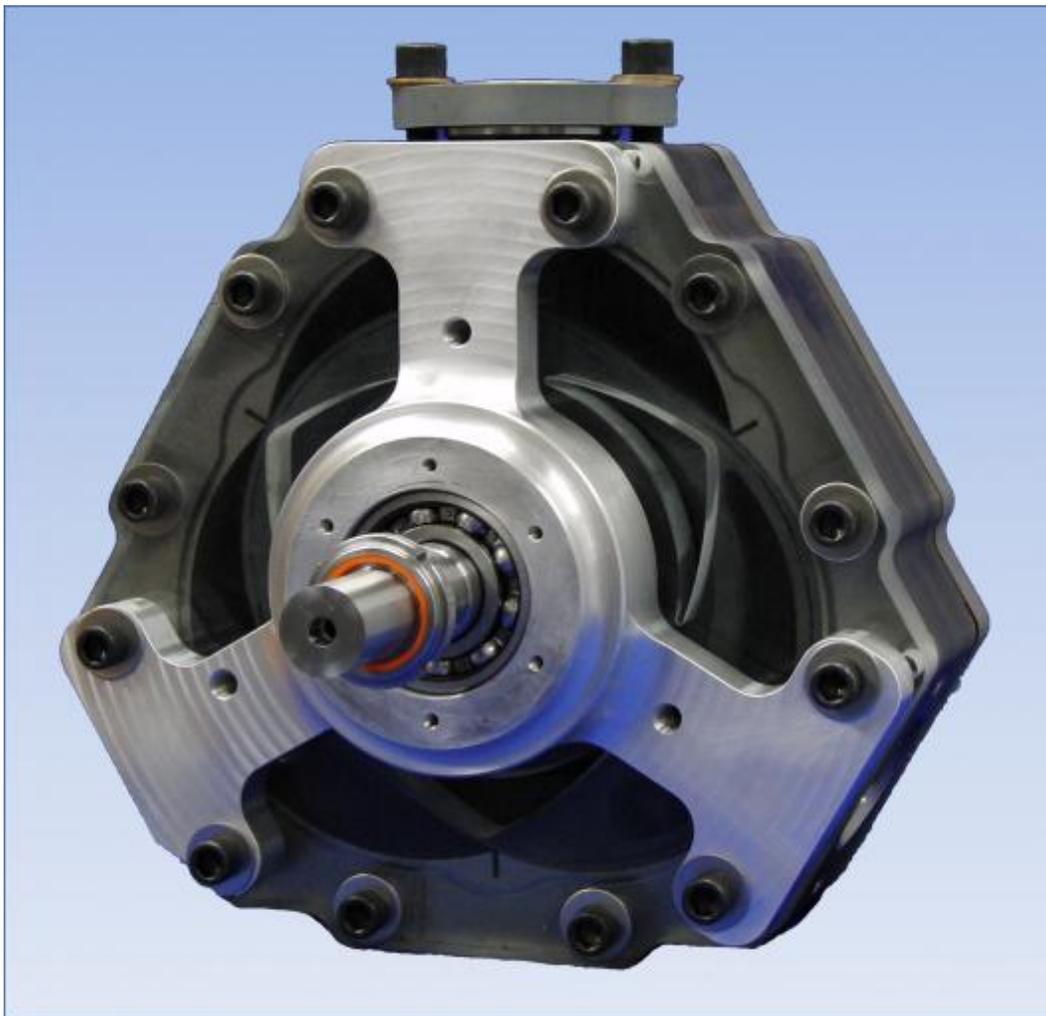
- High Compression ratio
- Constant-volume combustion
- Over-expansion

The idea is to compress the air in the LiquidPiston X2 engine to a very high ratio as in the diesel cycle and then isolating it in a constant volume chamber. When fuel is injected, it's allowed to mix with the air and it auto-ignites as in a diesel engine, but the fuel/air mixture isn't allowed to expand. Instead, it's kept compressed in a constant volume so it can burn over an extended period, as in the Otto cycle. When the burning fuel/air mix is allowed to expand, it's then overexpanded to near-atmospheric pressure. In this way, all the fuel is burned and almost all of the energy released is captured as work. Shkolnik calls this use of constant volume combustion "the holy grail of automotive engineering."

Constant volume combustion and overexpansion provide an HEHC engine like the X2 with a number of benefits. Shkolnik points out that the X2 engine is exceptionally quiet because it burns all of its fuel. In current ICE engines, an alarming amount of fuel goes out the tailpipe. This not only cuts down on fuel efficiency and pollutes the air, it also makes the engine noisy. Since the X2 engine burns its fuel completely, there's no need for complicated silencing apparatus.

The overexpansion used in the cycle also means that there is very little waste heat. An ICE only converts only 30 percent of its heat into work while the X2 engine has a thermal efficiency of 75 percent, so a water cooling system isn't necessary. Water may be injected into an HEHC engine during compression or expansion for cooling, but doing so also helps to lubricate and seal the chamber and as the water cools the engine it converts into superheated steam, which boosts engine efficiency.

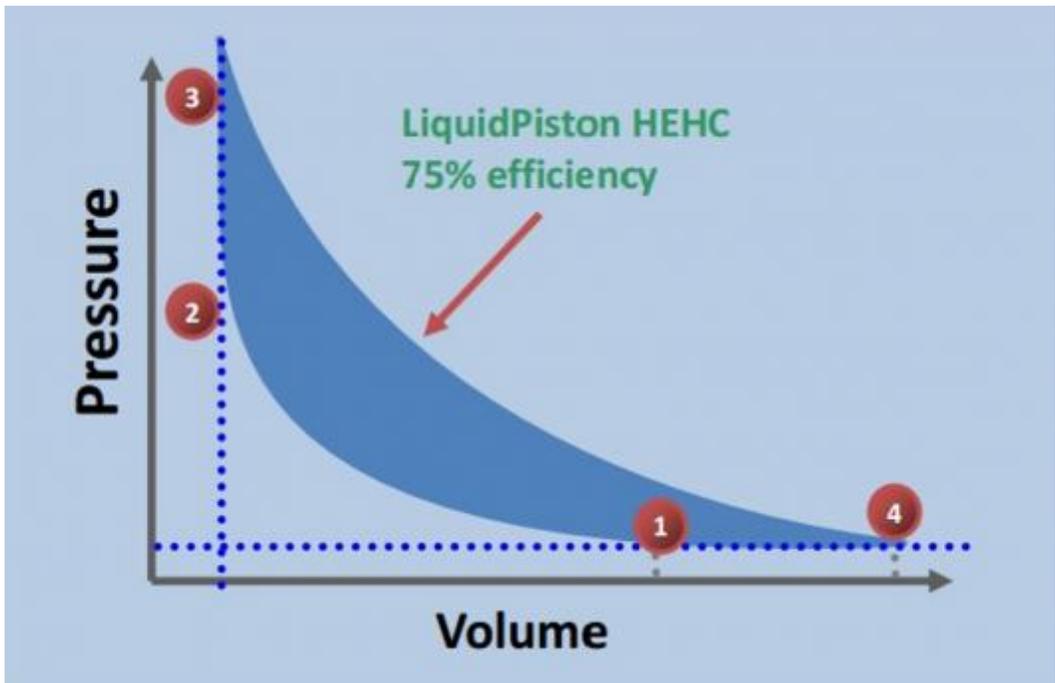
Shkolnik says that the X2 engine is a rotary because piston engines aren't suitable for the HEHC and a rotary engine provides much more flexibility. Also, the use of a rotary design greatly simplifies the engine with only three moving parts and 13 major components required. That allows the X2 to be one-tenth the size of a comparable diesel engine.



When asked whether the X2 engine isn't just an updated Wankel, Shkolnik pointed out that though both are rotary engines, the Wankel is very different. For one thing, it uses a straightforward Otto cycle like a piston engine and operates at a much lower compression rate than the X2. In comparison, the X2 engine is almost the opposite of a Wankel. "It's almost like the Wankel engine flipped inside-out," said Shkolnik.

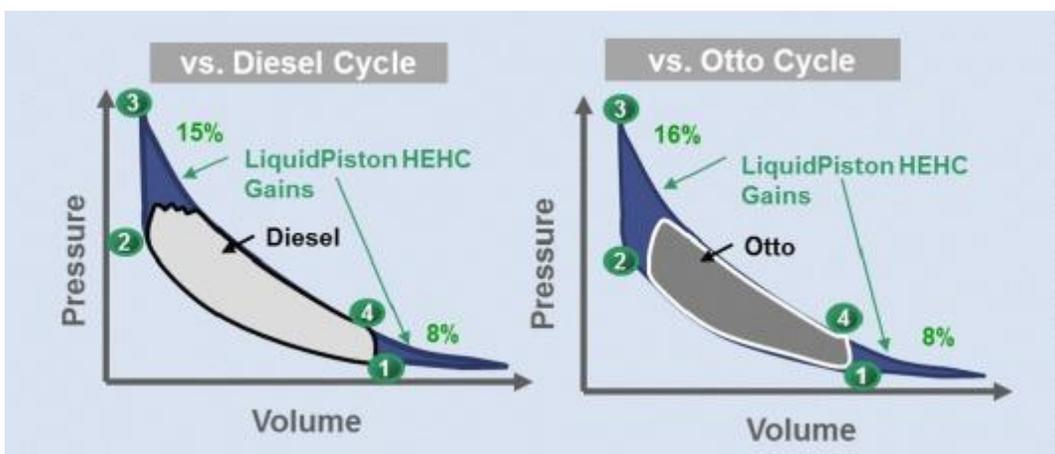
Not only does the X2 engine work on a different principle from the Wankel, but it doesn't suffer from the same limitations. The X2 engine has a better surface to volume ratio, it doesn't have the thermodynamic limitations of the Otto cycle and it doesn't have the emissions problems of the Wankel. The Wankel has apex seals that are carried

around with the rotor and need to be lubricated. To do this, oil has to be sprayed on them, which means that the Wankel is burning oil as it runs, resulting in the high emissions that have recently curtailed its use. The X2 engine, on the other hand, moves the seals from the rotor to the crankcase, so no special lubrication is required.



Another way that the X2 engine differs from the Wankel is that Shkolnik has no intention of it sharing the same fate as the Wankel, which turned into an automotive also-ran when put head to head with the ICE or hybrid electrics to power motor cars, (though he admits that the X2 engine would be an excellent range extender for hybrids). Instead, he plans to go after niche markets that can use the X2's peculiar strengths.

One place where the X2 engine may have an advantage is in auxiliary power units (APUs). Shkolnik said that an enormous amount of diesel fuel is wasted by lorry drivers for "hotel" purposes. That is, when they stop overnight they leave their engines idling to provide power for the living amenities of their long-distance rigs. Small, lightweight diesel power units with high fuel efficiency, he believes, would be particularly attractive.



Another area is military applications. The U.S. military has a need for APUs that can run on heavy fuels, which the X2 engine can. Also, the Pentagon is very keen on developing robots. According to Shkolnik, "you can do amazing things with robots, but ask a robot to carry this giant engine and there's problems." He believes that the X2 engine may be the answer to these problems. In addition, the military has need of APUs for tanks, which suffer from extremely bad fuel efficiency from idling to run electronics.

Currently, LiquidPiston is running its original X1 engine in tests, which has been built after only a year from its first design concept. This month, the company unveiled the X2, which is a more fully integrated engine with a simpler construction, at the DEER Conference in Dearborn, Michigan. Shkolnik says that the X2 will be available for partner tests in 2013 as a new round of financing is launched and he hopes to have a preproduction prototype by 2014.

[20121022-14](#) 21:31 SandyI Quotes: Gotta Share

"A woman voting for Romney is like a turkey supporting Thanksgiving."

"You can't change the direction of the wind. But you can adjust the sail."

<http://soundlikejeff.wordpress.com/tag/sample-rate/>

Great 1906 San Francisco Earthquake



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

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## FRIENDS OF THE MIDDLE NEWSLETTER #254 — OCT. 24, 2012

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

**INDEX: Click here.**

### **In the Trenches of Class Warfare**

(posted by Steven W. Baker / SteveB, Oct. 24, 2012)

Never in my life have I seen such blatant lying as we have seen from Republicans this year used as a campaign tactic. The rule should be: **a liar cannot be President!** Please get out and vote! Vote early! Vote often! Vote Democratic! Make everyone you know do the same, even if you have to threaten that, if they don't, you will have your old Mafia friend come and break their kneecaps with a baseball bat. Most people don't usually want that. What America wants is free and honest elections. Here's why we don't want the election stolen by the liars:



"Obama as Commander-in-Chief, Romney as Dithering Bully" by Robert Reich, Huffington Post

Oct. 22, 2012, ([http://www.huffingtonpost.com/robert-reich/foreign-policy-debate\\_b\\_2004061.html?utm\\_hp\\_ref=politics](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/robert-reich/foreign-policy-debate_b_2004061.html?utm_hp_ref=politics))

I thought the third and last presidential debate was a clear win for the president. He displayed the authority of the nation's Commander-in-Chief -- calm, dignified, and confident. He was assertive without being shrill, clear without being condescending. He explained to a clueless Mitt Romney the way the world actually works.

Romney seemed out of his depth. His arguments were more a series of bromides than positions -- "we have to make sure arms don't get into the wrong hands," "we want a peaceful planet," "we need to stand by our principles," "we need strong allies," "we need a comprehensive strategy to move the world away from terrorism."

This has been Romney's problem all along, of course, but in the first debate he managed to disguise his vacuousness with a surprisingly combative, well-rehearsed performance. By the second debate, the disguise was wearing thin.

In tonight's debate, Romney seemed to wither -- and wander. He often had difficulty distinguishing his approach from the President's, except to say, repeatedly, "America needs strong leadership."

On the few occasions when Romney managed to criticize the President, he called for a more assertive foreign policy -- but he never specified exactly what that assertiveness would entail. He wanted "tougher economic sanctions on Iran," for example, or "stronger support for Israel" -- the details of which were never revealed.

Obama's most targeted criticism of Romney, on the other hand, went to Romney's core weakness -- that Romney's positions have been inconsistent, superficial, and often wrong: "Every time you've offered an opinion," said Obama, "you've been wrong."

Nonetheless, I kept wishing Obama would take more credit for one of the most successful foreign policies of any administration in decades: not only finding and killing Osama bin Laden but also ridding the world of Libya's Gaddafi without getting drawn into a war, imposing extraordinary economic hardship on Iran, isolating Syria, and navigating the treacherous waters of Arab Spring.

Obama pointed to these achievements, but I thought he could have knitted them together into an overall approach to world affairs that has been in sharp contrast to the swaggering, bombastic foreign policies of his predecessor.

Like George W. Bush, Mitt Romney has a pronounced tendency to rush to judgment - to assert America's military power too quickly, and to assume that we'll be viewed as weak if we use diplomacy and seek the cooperation of other nations (including Russia and China) before making our moves.

President Obama won tonight's debate not only because he knows more about foreign policy than does Mitt Romney, but because Obama understands how to wield the soft as well as the hard power of America. He came off as more subtle and convincing than Romney -- more authoritative -- because, in reality, he is.

Although Monday night's topic was foreign policy, I hope Americans understood it was also about every other major challenge we face. Mitt Romney is not only a cold warrior; he's also a class warrior. And the two are closely related. Romney tries to disguise both within an amenable demeanor. But in both capacities, he's a bully.

["Angry Obama Loses to Unflappable Romney" by Michael Medved, The Daily Beast](#)

Oct. 23, 2012, (<http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2012/10/23/angry-obama-loses-to-unflappable-romney.html>)

(Why'd you spend your time smearing Mitt instead of actually talking foreign policy, Mr. President? A cool, consistent, and peace-loving Romney won, says Michael Medved.)

Mr. President, why so angry? What's up with that gloomy edge and the sour mood?

Aside from all the bewildering back-and-forth about Libya, Iran, apology tours, and auto bailouts, by far the most important aspect of the third and final presidential debate involved its atmospherics—which candidate came across

as more calming and confident, more plausible and reassuring as commander-in-chief? Which of the contenders, in other words, emerged from their final confrontation looking like a leader, frontrunner, and ultimate winner?

In that regard Barack Obama helped himself with his fluent command of foreign affairs and passionate engagement with the disparate subjects under discussion. But he hurt himself with a chip-on-the-shoulder demeanor and attack-dog aggressiveness against Mitt Romney. On several occasions the GOP nominee reasonably responded that "attacking me is not an agenda."

Debate viewers watched an odd spectacle in which the president of the United States, the most powerful man on earth, devoted a considerable portion of his prime opportunity to discuss his nation's place in the world, to smearing reviews of random speeches, interviews, and position papers by his unelected opponent.

As Jimmy Carter discovered in his single disastrous debate with Ronald Reagan, when the incumbent president concentrates his energy on savaging his opponent, he concedes to that rival the status of frontrunner. If he focuses on trying to scare the American people about the prospect of the other guy as president, he implicitly acknowledges that this prospect is both conceivable and imminent. Why else would he want to provoke worry of the opponent's proposals for the next four years rather than inspiring enthusiasm for his own?

Romney won the debate by offering an image of even-tempered geniality, good-natured self-assurance, and unshakable commitment to cautious, reasonable, and peace-loving leadership. When he repeatedly acknowledged his agreement with aspects of the president's policies, it reflected strength more than weakness and contrasted powerfully with Obama's annoying inability to find any aspect of his opponent's positions or career worthy of praise or even grudging acceptance. In an argument the combatant who takes the more critical and indignant tone almost always ends up as the loser.

This pattern will prove especially potent for the few remaining undecided voters or wavering independents who express their heartfelt yearning for more cooperation and conciliation from our elected officials in gridlocked Washington. Romney addressed that yearning explicitly with his reminder of his own record as a commonsense problem-solver who worked successfully with Democrats as governor of Massachusetts.

In selecting a chief executive to safeguard the nation's well-being in turbulent times, voters instinctively seek steadiness, cool, and consistency. This last quality gave Romney another edge in this climactic confrontation: the American people saw precisely the same unflappable guy who turned up at debate No. 1 and debate No. 2. In Obama's case the contrasts and metamorphoses seemed striking—from sleepy Obama to snippy-and-interrupting Obama in the second debate to angry-and-aggrieved Obama in debate No. 3.

These shifts in personal presentation may stem from coming adjustments in strategy and won't keep the president or his partisans from claiming victory in the final faceoff. After all, he delivered a vigorous, intermittently effective defense of a record in foreign affairs that has, as he claimed, kept the nation safe from major harm.

But in the process he wasted too much time trying to paint a formidable, sophisticated, and unmenacing opponent as a dangerous, warmongering amateur. But the frightening Halloween costume stubbornly refused to fit.

Meanwhile, Mitt may not be ready to don the cloak of presidential command, but in the third debate viewers at least got the chance to check him out as he credibly tried it on.

"Reality vs. 'Reality'" by Michael Tomasky, The Daily Beast

Oct. 23, 2012, (<http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2012/10/23/reality-vs-reality.html.html>)

(Obama won the debate, and everyone but Romney and the Republicans know that.)

Today may be the most important single day of the campaign. Obama won the debate. Everyone this side of Charles Krauthammer agrees that Romney was general and platitudinous and not that engaged. That makes two

out of three. You might think that would mean momentum. And yet the conventional wisdom is congealing right now—it is hardening this morning, minute by minute—that Romney is going to win the election.

From Playbook, which distills the c.w.: President Obama won last night's foreign-policy debate on substance, in snap polls and with the pundits, but Mitt Romney did well enough that for the first time in six years, Romney folks emailed, "We're going to win."

In reality, Obama is the favorite. The state maps still make him so. Nate Silver, the only person who takes every single poll into account (plus loads of other indicators), still has him so. This emerging c.w. is built more on spin and smell, which the media are starting to buy. One piece that Mike Allen bought this morning in that Playbook item: A Romney aide told him New Hampshire leans their way.

Ridiculous. Even RCP has Obama +3 in New Hampshire. A poll yesterday had him up nine. He's never trailed there. It's been a fight, true, but he is clearly on course to win it. But the Romney aide just threw it out there. Not blaming him or her—it's the kind of thing you throw out when you want to start giving an impression of inevitability. But that is what the Romney team is trying now to do. (It's up to journalism, of course, to say when something doesn't seem true.)

And so, after their side's third consecutive debate loss, conservatives are the ones feeling confident. They are creating a reality. They're talking up Romney's supposedly unstoppable momentum now that he's survived the debates without making one of those Gerry Ford-style goofs (that's the bar now for the presidency?). They're tweeting things about Silver, sharpening their knives, contemplating his November 7 takedown. They're not quite measuring the drapes, but they're getting their rulers out of storage.

Factually, this isn't remotely justified. At worst from Obama's perspective, the thing is tied. As far as we know, looking at all the averages, on a state-by-state basis he's ahead. If you assume seven or eight states in play and go through all the permutations, Obama often wins by taking just two or three of them. Yes, a lot hinges on Ohio. But he can win even without it (he needs a strong inside straight, but it's possible). Romney absolutely cannot.

Conservatives know all this. But they're constructing an opposite reality. This is at the heart of everything going on right now, I think. It's what they can do that liberals can't really do. They've always done it. "Romney is going to win" in 2012 isn't so different from "We'll be hailed as liberators" in 2003. They say something and try to make it so, and the media go for it time and time again.

This is what's maddening to liberals about what Romney has done since the first debate. He's constructed a new reality about himself and he's gotten away with it, mostly. Specifically, it's that he's flip-flopped on all these things without the remotest hint of acknowledgement that the old positions even existed. Last night's Afghanistan pirouette was stunning.

We're used to a politician who says, "You know, I once thought..." or something like that. Then our minds can kind of buy the idea that he's flip-flopping. Most pols do this. It used to be thought by political consultants that pols had to do that part of it. But not Romney and his team. No acknowledgement, not an inch. A complete lie. And a real f-you, by the way, to voters who'd like to know why he changed his mind, except why bother, really, since there's no substance there. He changed his mind to win, period.

So today is the most crucial day of the campaign. Republicans are going to be filling journalists' heads with the inevitability "reality": a few poll results, a few morsels from the trail, and so on. A lot of the media will keep writing it that way, too.

What should Obama do? Well, Republicans want to make Democrats fearful and jittery and reactive—appear to be accepting the Republican premise. So basically, anything but that. These next two or three days will be crucial, and if the Democrats do seem fearful and reactive, they'll help the new c.w. congeal and maybe help seal a fate that the facts don't yet come close to foreordaining.

[20121023-01](#) 07:25 SteveB Re: 'Where Do We Come From, Grandpa?' (reply to Pam, FotM Newsletter #253)

Pam: "It's the 'I'm right and you're wrong' mentality that drives me around the bend."

Especially about things like Jesus being married when everyone knows he wasn't!?

Yes, as we have discussed a little...when people think they know the mind of God, that they have the answers and the "good" lies beyond this realm in the afterlife, they can justify nearly any horror, here, in the name of getting there. As they say in Tennessee, that there is a very dangerous thingee.

And, yep, I don't get it either...especially as a driver of passion. Inexplicable!

We have a couple of friends here who love Jesus Christ. I mean, seriously! He's been dead a while, even if he's in heaven, right? I don't get it! And, even if he's the greatest thing since toast, to, like, literally love and adore him? Come on! I don't even feel that way about Melville. (And, by the way, have you read *Moby Dick* lately? It's so astounding! To think, the experts searched for the "great American novel" for how long? Maybe they're still searching... There it was, all along. What do experts know?)

[20121023-02](#) 11:00 Pam Re: 'Where Do We Come From, Grandpa?' (reply to SteveB, above)

I do think *Moby Dick* is the great American novel. I find the whaling chapters rather hard going, but the epic story of man against nature and the destructiveness of obsession tap into the American core.

I guess if love is all in our head, with a little help from our hormones, then you could talk yourself into feeling love for just about anything--a cat, a dog, a plant, Jesus, the color purple.

Yep: I just couldn't see myself wolfing down a plate of nachos of any kind, as reading my book while eating is a big part of the ritual, on days when I have no visitors. The book had hotted up enough that the extra napkin action just wasn't going to cut it.

So I had a LARGE salad. A small salad is huge, a large one is... bigger:



A Lovely Salad

This looks good, but I'm going to try to wait for at least a 50-50 split. 40% hardly seems worth my effort. Maybe the dude is desperate enough to give me a better offer?

from "Dr. Ibrahim Shorowa":

ASSALAMU'ALAYKUM!!!!!!

DEAR FRIEND

With due respect to your person and much sincerity of purpose, I make this contact with you as I believe that you can be of great assistance to me. My name is Dr.Ibrahim shorowa, from Ouagadougou Republic of BURKINA FASO , West Africa . Presently I work in the African development Bank as telex manager. I have been searching for your contact since you left our country some years ago.

I do not know whether this is your correct email address or not because I only used your name initials to search for your contact .In case you are not the person I am supposed to contact, please see this as a confidential message

and do not reveal it to another person but if you are not the intended receiver, do let me know whether you can be of assistance regarding my proposal below because it is top secret.

I am about to retire from active Bank service to start a new life but I am sceptical to reveal this particular secret to a stranger. You must assure me that everything will be handled confidentially because we are not going to suffer again in life.

It has been 10 years now that most of the greedy African Politicians used our bank to launder money overseas through the help of their Political advisers. Most of the funds which they transferred out of the shores of Africa were gold and oil money that was supposed to have been used to develop the continent. Their Political advisers always inflated the amounts before transfer to foreign accounts so I also used the opportunity to divert part of the funds hence I am aware that there is no official trace of how much was transferred as all the accounts used for such transfers were being closed after transfer.

I acted as the Bank Officer to most of the politicians and when I discovered that they were using me to succeed in their greedy act; I also cleaned some of their banking records from the Bank files and no one cared to ask me because the money was too much for them to control. They laundered over \$5b Dollars during the process .As I am sending this message to you, I was able to divert thirty five million united state dollars (\$35m) to an escrow account belonging to no one in the bank. The bank is anxious now to know who the beneficiary to the funds is because they have made a lot of profits with the funds.

It is more than Eight years now and most of the politicians are no longer using our bank to transfer funds overseas. The (\$35) Million Dollars has been LAYING waste but I don't want to retire from the bank without transferring the funds to a foreign account to enable me share the proceeds with the receiver. The money will be shared 60% for me and 40% for you.

There is no one coming to ask you about the funds because I secured everything. I only want you to assist me by providing a bank account where the funds can be transferred. You are not to face any difficulties or legal implications as I am going to handle the transfer personally. If you are capable of receiving the funds, do let me know immediately to enable me give you DETAILED information on what to do.

For me, I have not stolen the money from anyone because the other people that took the whole money did not face any problems. This is my chance also to grab my own but you must keep the details of the funds secret to avoid any leakages as no one in the bank knows about the funds.

Please get back to me if you are interested and capable to handle this project

I shall intimate you on what to do when I hear from your confirmation and acceptance. If you are capable of being my trusted associate, do declare your consent to me.

Waiting for your urgent response. Yours Faithfully, Dr.ibrahim shorowa

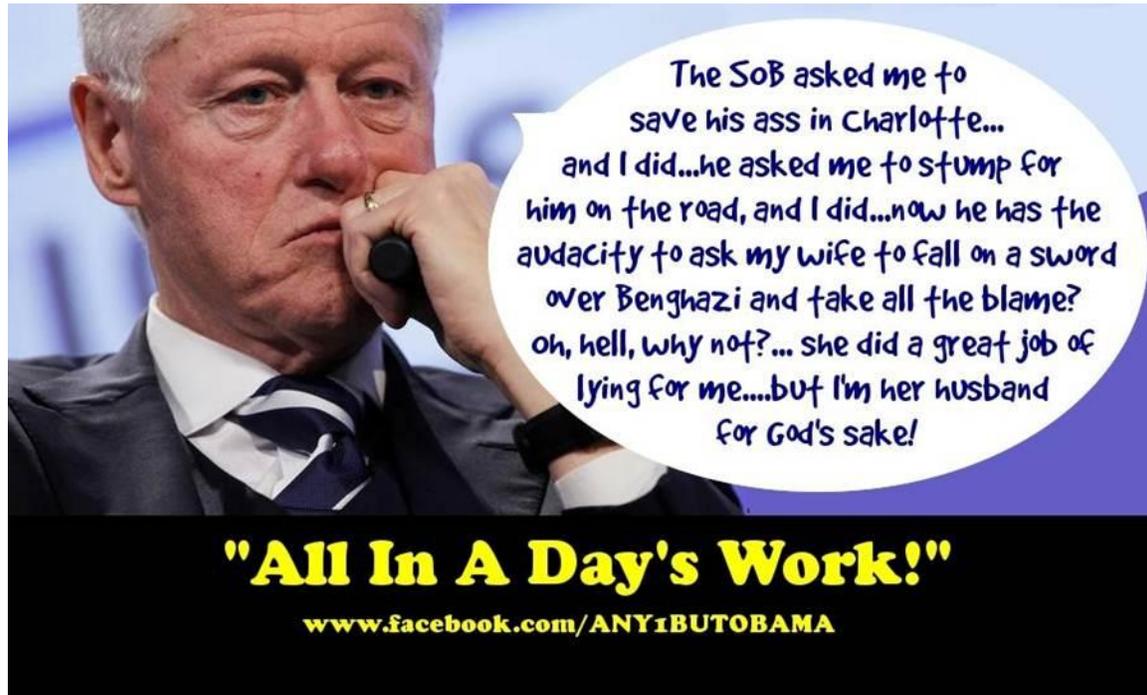
<http://www.boliviabella.com/ii-festival-de-msica-alternativa-independiente.html>



Greg posted this on Facebook and I'll have to admit I LOVE IT!!!!!! And I didn't even watch the debate, but I am a devotee of Monty Python's Flying Circus.



This shows how low the President Obama campaign has sunk. B.H.O. has the "lying, rapist-in-chief, anti-military bigot" working for them.



Isn't this special? UN affiliated folks from Central Asia and Europe are coming to monitor our elections to make sure that conservative groups don't suppress the votes of the vulnerables.

I wonder if they will be at that polling place in Philadelphia, where, in 2008, the New Black Panthers were making comments about "white crackers," while playing with their billy clubs?

[All the more reason, it seems to me, to have as many monitors as possible. Americans monitor elections the world over, I'm happy to have them come and help us out. I hope they send some computer experts because I don't trust any voting machine as far as I can throw it. I also don't trust Black Panthers playing with billy clubs, white crackers, or the Tea party when it comes to our elections! -SteveB]

"International Monitors at US Polling Spots Draw Criticism from Voter Fraud Groups" by Alexander Bolton, The Hill

Oct. 20, 2012, (<http://thehill.com/homenews/campaign/263141-international-monitors-at-polling-places-draw-criticism-from-voter-fraud-group>)

United Nations-affiliated election monitors from Europe and central Asia will be at polling places around the U.S. looking for voter suppression activities by conservative groups, a concern raised by civil rights groups during a meeting this week. The intervention has drawn criticism from a prominent conservative-leaning group combating election fraud.

The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), a United Nations partner on democratization and human rights projects, will deploy 44 observers from its human rights office around the country on Election Day to

monitor an array of activities, including potential disputes at polling places. It's part of a broader observation mission that will send out an additional 80 to 90 members of parliament from nearly 30 countries.

Liberal-leaning civil rights groups met with representatives from the OSCE this week to raise their fears about what they say are systematic efforts to suppress minority voters likely to vote for President Obama.

The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights, the NAACP and the ACLU, among other groups, warned this month in a letter to Daan Everts, a senior official with OSCE, of "a coordinated political effort to disenfranchise millions of Americans — particularly traditionally disenfranchised groups like minorities."

The request for foreign monitoring of election sites drew a strong rebuke from Catherine Engelbrecht, founder and president of True the Vote, a conservative-leaning group seeking to crack down on election fraud.

"These activist groups sought assistance not from American sources, but from the United Nations," she said in a statement to The Hill. "The United Nations has no jurisdiction over American elections."

Neil Simon, director of communications for the OSCE's parliamentary assembly, agreed the U.N. does not have jurisdiction over U.S. elections but noted all OSCE member countries, which include the United States, have committed since 1990 to hold free and democratic elections and to allow one another to observe their elections.

The observers, from countries such as Germany, France, Serbia, Belarus, Ukraine and Kazakhstan, will observe voting at polling places and other political activity.

"They [will] observe the overall election process, not just the ballot casting," said Giovanna Maiola, spokeswoman for OSCE. "They are focusing on a number of areas on the state level, including the legal system, election administration, the campaign, the campaign financing [and] new voting technologies used in the different states."

In a follow-up e-mail, Maiola noted that it is a limited election-observation mission. She said "the OSCE has regularly been invited to observe elections in the United States, in line with OSCE commitments."

Access of international observers during voting is explicitly allowed in some states such as Missouri, South Dakota, North Dakota and New Mexico.

"State law does not generally provide for international observers," Maiola said. "However, through our contacts at state and county level in certain states, we managed to secure invitations at local level and we have taken up the offer to observe. Where this is not possible, we will respect the state regulation on this matter and will not observe in precincts on Election Day."

International observers will follow up on the concerns raised by civil rights groups.

"We attended their meeting, we took note of the issues they raised and we asked our observers in the field to follow up on them," said Maiola.

The OSCE has 56 participating states from Europe, Central Asia and North America, including the United States and Canada. It has assessed elections in the United States since 2002.

Voting is expected to be more contentious this November than in past years because of a running battle over election law pitting conservative groups and Republican state officials against the Obama administration and liberal allies.

The Obama campaign scored a victory this week when the Supreme Court declined to hear an appeal filed by Republican officials in Ohio seeking to limit the state's early voting program.

Last month in Wisconsin, the state Supreme Court declined to immediately review lower-court rulings invalidating a voter-identification law signed by Republican Gov. Scott Walker.

In Florida, judges stopped attempts to restrict voter-registration drives but allowed measures to reduce days of early voting and to remove non-citizens from voting rolls to stand.

Both sides expect wrangling over voter identification and eligibility to extend to polling places and are recruiting armies of volunteers for Election-Day showdowns.

True the Vote, a group with Tea Party origins, has an ambitious plan to deploy hundreds of thousands of volunteers at polling stations to monitor election fraud.

"We may surpass a million volunteers or fall short, it will be hard to know," said Engelbrecht. "But we're very excited about the level of enthusiasm, the number of volunteers, and the fact that we had a positive impact in bringing awareness to this important issue, of election integrity."

Democratic allies will counter with their own forces. The AFL-CIO will dispatch 300 lawyers to monitor poll workers and third-party groups challenging voter registration.

The Advancement Project, a self-described multi-racial civil rights organization, will send more than 3,000 poll watchers to battleground states.

The Election Protection coalition, which includes Democratic allies such as the Sierra Club, Service Employees International Union and People for the American Way, plans to recruit 8,000 to 10,000 volunteers to cover 80 cities and counties.

"We hope that all groups that are putting people at a polling place, that they should follow the law and they should be there to make sure that responsible Americans who wish to participate in our democracy are able to free of intimidation," said Eric Marshall, co-leader of Election Protection.

Civil rights groups have complained about what they say are subtle efforts of intimidation. They point to a billboard campaign in swing states such as Ohio warning voter fraud is a felony punishable by up to three and a half years in prison and a \$10,000 fine.

Engelbrecht of True the Vote says intimidation is not her group's motive.

"We are not in the business of picking winners or losers, but instead, to ensure that the process is iron-clad," she said. "Properly trained and capable poll watchers or workers should offer no indication of their partisan or ideological leanings to voters at the polls."

[Smoooooooooth! –SteveB]



### Miracle cure kills fifth patient

**By The Associated Press**

A fifth volunteer died Tuesday from an experimental drug tested as a miracle cure for hepatitis B, beyond medical rescue even as scientists unraveled the mystery of what went gravely wrong in a clinical trial.

Aggravatingly, the first clue was in plain sight a year ago, but researchers at the National Institutes of Health didn't know enough about how the drug worked to recognize what it meant, the study's lead scientist says.

"Something terrible happened and we missed it," Dr. Jay Hoofnagle said in an emotional interview describing the horror of realizing the drug was killing people months after they stopped taking it.

"The dreadful thing [is] waiting to see what will happen," he said, his voice trembling, before learning of the most recent death. "I just hope we're over the worst."

The drug Fialuridine, or FIAU, had shown great promise for fighting the hepatitis B virus, which can cause deadly cirrhosis and liver cancer. When dogs passed toxicity tests unharmed, the Food and Drug Administration approved FIAU for human trials.

Too late, scientists would discover that in humans, FIAU stealthily attacks the very building blocks of cells in livers, kidneys and nerves.

Five people treated with FIAU have died of liver and kidney failure, despite liver transplants for three of them. On Tuesday, a 33-year-old woman succumbed after two months in critical condition, and two liver transplants at the University of Virginia Medical Center. One volunteer remains in serious condition there, and another is recovering from an Aug. 4 transplant at Emory University Hospital in Atlanta.

## The bra celebrates a pair of historic milestones this year

After 100 years of innovation, the device still holds up

**By SHARON FINK**  
*N. Petersburg Times*

It's time to mark two important milestones in the

bra, the Wonderbra, the water bra, bras are constantly evolving.

Although it often may not feel like it, the industry's No. 1 goal is comfort, said Norah Alberto, senior style director at Maidenform.

"You kind of want to forget you're wearing (a bra)," she

moment that got the cultural pot-stirrer as much attention for her image as her music.

Bras as outerwear were eventually joined by bustiers and corset tops (without bones in them). Then slips started being worn as dresses. Camisoles became a dressier kind of tank top. And under-

<http://mylifemytrip.com/music-video-pitbull-international-love-hits-more-than-125-m/>



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

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<http://www.FriendsOfTheMiddle.org>  
[FriendsOfTheMiddle@hotmail.com](mailto:FriendsOfTheMiddle@hotmail.com)

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## FRIENDS OF THE MIDDLE NEWSLETTER #255 — OCT. 25, 2012

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

**[INDEX: Click here.](#)**

### **The Evil God of Conservatives**

(posted by Steven W. Baker / SteveB, Oct. 25, 2012)



Indiana GOP U.S. Senate candidate Richard Mourdock indicates the size of penis he happens to know God intends for victims of rape.

I'm so happy these conservatives know what God wants for each of us other folks! They know it beyond the shadow of a doubt, and they aren't really shy about seeking to impose their "heavenly vision" on the rest of us—the Constitution be damned! I can't really see the difference between Muslims wanting to impose their view of God on the world and what these anti-American Christians want to do. And, actually, with R0mney's \$2 trillion more for defense, the Christians and Mormons prove they want to impose their crap on the rest of the world too, not just Americans!

I guess Mourdock is not a very good Christian. Otherwise, wouldn't he have to believe in...gulp, shudder...Satan? And wouldn't he have to believe that some acts on Earth are caused by evil rather than directly by God's intentions? So how does he happen to know which intentions are which? Does he have a pact with Satan, as his facial expressions seem to indicate?

Have you ever noticed how history shows that, once someone "knows" what God wants or intends and decides to impose it on the rest of society, tragedy, destruction, and suffering are sure to follow?

"Richard Mourdock on Abortion: Pregnancy from Rape Is 'Something God Intended'" by Michael McAuliff, Huffington Post

Oct. 23, 2012, ([http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/10/23/richard-murdock-abortion\\_n\\_2007482.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/10/23/richard-murdock-abortion_n_2007482.html))

(WASHINGTON) Indiana GOP U.S. Senate candidate Richard Mourdock declared Tuesday night he opposes aborting pregnancies conceived in rape because "it is something that God intended to happen."

Debating Rep. Joe Donnelly (D-Ind.) in their final Senate race showdown, a questioner asked them and Libertarian candidate Andrew Horning to explain their views on abortion.

All three said they were anti-abortion. But Mourdock went even further, putting himself in territory near Missouri GOP Senate candidate Rep. Todd Akin, the anti-abortion congressman who infamously asserted that women don't get pregnant from "legitimate rape."

"The only exception I have to have an abortion is in the case of the life of the mother," said Mourdock, the Tea Party-backed state treasurer. "I struggled with it myself for a long time, but I came to realize life is that gift from God. I think that even when life begins in that horrible situation of rape, that it is something that God intended to happen."

Murdock unseated veteran Republican Sen. Richard Lugar in the May primary, and has battled Donnelly for the longtime senator's supporters since. Abortion has been a touchy issue for the candidates, with Mourdock accusing Donnelly of lacking strength on the issue because Donnelly backed the health care reform law. Donnelly has criticized a requirement that ensures women can get birth control, even when their employer objects to contraception.

"I believe in pro-life," Donnelly said, carving out somewhat more moderate anti-abortion stance. "I believe that life begins at conception. The only exceptions I believe in are for rape, incest and the life a mother."

Horning argued that the Supreme Court's Roe v. Wade decision was unconstitutional, and that abortion issues should be state matters.

UPDATE: 10:20 pm:

GOP presidential nominee Mitt Romney, who has endorsed Mourdock and supports him in a campaign ad that began running in Indiana on Tuesday, took issue with Mourdock's abortion comments, a spokeswoman said.

"Gov. Romney disagrees with Richard Mourdock's comments, and they do not reflect his views," Romney campaign spokeswoman Andrea Saul said.

UPDATE: 9:55 pm:

Murdock tried to clarify his comments soon after the debate, saying God does not intend sexual assaults.

"God creates life, and that was my point," Mourdock said in a statement. "God does not want rape, and by no means was I suggesting that He does. Rape is a horrible thing, and for anyone to twist my words otherwise is absurd and sick."

Nevertheless, Democrats jumped on the comments as further proof that Murdock is an extremist.

"I think rape is a heinous and violent crime in every instance," said Donnelly in his own statement. "The God I believe in and the God I know most Hoosiers believe in, does not intend for rape to happen -- ever. What Mr. Mourdock said is shocking, and it is stunning that he would be so disrespectful to survivors of rape."

"Richard Mourdock's disturbing comment about rape is a window into Mourdock's extreme view of the world, " said Shripal Shah, spokesman for the Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee. "Indiana can't afford to send a self-proclaimed 'zealot' and Tea Partier like Richard Mourdock to the Senate."

Murdock has been trying to soften some of his postions for the general election after running on a platform that described compromise as when Democrats came to agree with him.

Horning had argued earlier in the debate that Mourdock should stick with the harder line.

"As I was reading about the extreme stands of Richard Mourdock I was thinking, 'Hey, there's hope for this guy.' A lot of the stuff that he said was correct," Horning said, referring to Mourdock's suggestions that entitlement programs such as Medicare and Social Security may not be constitutional.

"He has repudiated a lot of those statements. Some of it was about the unconstitutionality...right on," Horning said. "We need somebody who is going to stick with principles."

Richard Mourdock's mentor, Satan, speaks at a Moorcock fundraising cabal. (Tea Party Tribune)



20121024-06 09:28 MarthaH Re: The Evil God of Conservatives (reply to SteveB, above)

Amen, brother. But they are too pious to see the forest for their trees. The first thing I thought of was W's code word usage for the Further Right to a fan showing up on election day. I can't see that our wackos are any less scary than the foreign ones--and they DO talk funny!!!!!! Remember Akin...and...

That times have been like this before and we weren't alive yet sort of makes all this IGNORANCE more scary, perhaps?

20121024-10 09:58 Pam Re: The Evil God of Conservatives (reply to SteveB, above)

If God doesn't intend for rape to happen, then why does it?

20121024-12 11:02 Art Re: The Evil God of Conservatives (reply to Pam, above)

Is this the same loving, caring God who brought us the Black Death and innumerable wars, killing millions, many in God's name? Makes sense to me.

20121024-17 12:23 SteveB Re: The Evil God of Conservatives (reply to all, above)

SPECIAL ANNOUNCEMENT: I just learned (from my sources, and one of them is a cat) that God intends President Obama to win the election! You heard it here first, Satan be damned!

And if God intends the lady in question to be raped, and get pregnant... how the hell do we know he didn't "intend" for her to get an abortion? If pregnancy from rape is part of God's plan, don't they believe that everything is? Didn't God "invent" abortion because he thought it might prove useful to some of us? Like hand grenades?

After all, maybe God intends women to be raped who dress a certain way, or even vote a certain way! We all know Progressives have loose morals, right, Rush?

I guess we can't expect logic or consistency from these people, but a government and even a political party like the GOP should.

At least we know now that God must intend abortion to be legal, because it is! Surely, He wouldn't want us to change something he intends.

But conservatives might respond: "But God intends for us to change the law."

I say, "Exactly!" Maybe God intends for us to change that unwanted pregnancy so cruelly thrust upon the woman, using the law (actually a court decision) God so conveniently has provided for that purpose.

If God intends everything, that doesn't leave much room for the highly vaunted FREEDOM conservatives like to talk about so much, does it? Freedom can't exist in that view of the world, but, then, neither can logic—all is paradox.

I wonder what they think God intended with Mohammed with his slaves and Biblical revisionism, or Joseph Smith with his many wives and radical Biblical revisionism?

20121024-18 12:25 Pam Re: The Evil God of Conservatives (reply to SteveB, above)

It's called "magical thinking."

20121024-19 12:52 Phil Re: The Evil God of Conservatives (reply to all, above)

I am writing with the full intention of "eating crow". I know I have espoused on more than one occasion that we should throw "all the bums" out, both sides of the aisle. Now to my extreme embarrassment as a Hoosier, I am left to ponder the success of that promotion since we voted (NOT ME) in Indiana to replace Lugar with this idiot!! Quite obviously, this is not what I meant.

20121024-22 16:36 Art Re: The Evil God of Conservatives (reply to all, above)

And some are still thinking of voting for these people?????????????????

"I struggled with it myself for a long time, but I came to realize life is that gift from God. I think that even when life begins in that horrible situation of rape, that it is something that God intended to happen." —Republican Senate candidate Richard Mourdock at a debate last night.

20121024-01 05:05 MarthaH Pens to Paper, So to Speak...

For all of us who have witnessed a changing world in our lives--from being raised by those who survived The Great Depression and WW II among other issues of their lives and in a time of great turmoil and change for our place in the world, I would ask for posterity that you take time to record your observations and feelings. My place to start is with 2000, where I feel I can now see behind and in front of me. Many on Friends of the Middle have word skills, and I feel it imperative that we record what we sense from our diverse but common vantage points. There has been plenty of change since most of us were growing up in small town America. Many twists were good things, and some were directionally challenged by no fault of our own. All of us have our areas of "expertise," and perspective, and that will add to the annals of history for our grandchildren, if not a larger audience. We have a lot to say! The time is now. The first person chronology trumps, I believe, as the historian takes them and blends them into the whole picture. Surely you read some of the colonial, war, exploratory, or literary journals in your trek called life. Please add to them in your way.

[Thank you, Martha! I hope many of our contributors and readers will avail themselves of this opportunity to create a record of their thoughts and feelings for posterity. —SteveB]

20121024-02 05:21 MarthaH "Supreme Court Makeup Not a Top Campaign Issue"

"Supreme Court Makeup Not a Top Campaign Issue" by Richard Wolf, *USA Today*

Oct. 24, 2012, (<http://www.usatoday.com/story/news/politics/2012/10/23/supreme-court-not-top-campaign-issue/1653413/>)

(The chance that Obama or Romney could tilt the court very far in one direction or the other is remote.)

(WASHINGTON) The Supreme Court could be transformed by the man elected president Nov. 6, but you wouldn't know it from the campaign the candidates are waging.

Despite four justices in their 70s, a political impasse over lower-court judges and a slew of controversial social issues that could come up in the next four years, the high court has been relegated to the bench in the campaign between President Obama and Republican Mitt Romney.

The reasons are many: Democrats were satisfied with the court's ruling in June that upheld Obama's health care law. Republicans can't really criticize a court still dominated by conservatives. Most voters are more focused on jobs and the economy. And those who care deeply about judicial issues likely chose a candidate long ago. Perhaps most important, the chance that Obama or Romney could tilt the court very far in one direction or the other is remote. That's because most justices choose to retire when their party is in power, and no retirements are immediately forecast.

"The Supreme Court is a theoretical problem, not an actual problem" because there are no vacancies, says Wade Henderson of the Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights, a coalition of advocacy groups. But he says potential vacancies in the future, as well as a huge number of lower court vacancies, should make the judiciary more of an issue in this and future elections.

The last four court vacancies show how most presidential nominations have had a small but potentially significant impact. Obama's choices of Sonia Sotomayor and Elena Kagan solidified liberals' hold on four seats. George W. Bush's selections of John Roberts and Samuel Alito firmed up the conservative side.

The most likely opportunity for a significant change would come if Romney were elected and Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg left during his presidency. Ginsburg is 79 and a cancer survivor. Three other justices also were born when Franklin Roosevelt was president: Conservatives Antonin Scalia and Anthony Kennedy are 76 and liberal Stephen Breyer is 74. All three are in relatively good health, however, and unlikely to step down if their party is out of power.

Curt Levey, executive director of the conservative Committee for Justice, says conservatives should not be "lulled into a false sense of security." One key opportunity for Obama could swing the court to the left. "We're more at a tipping point than we've ever been in my lifetime," he says.

Kennedy's departure would be noteworthy. Since moderate Sandra Day O'Connor's departure in 2006, he has been the most frequent swing vote. "It's going to be World War III when somebody gets to replace Anthony Kennedy," says Carrie Severino, chief counsel and policy director at the Judicial Crisis Network and a former law clerk for Justice Clarence Thomas.

Vice President Biden raised the court as an issue in his debate with Rep. Paul Ryan of Wisconsin earlier this month. "The next president will get one or two Supreme Court nominees. That's how close Roe v. Wade is," Biden said, referring to the 1973 decision that legalized abortion nationwide. "Just ask yourself: With Robert Bork being the chief adviser on the court for Mr. Romney, who do you think he's likely to appoint?"

Romney's website answers that question. "As president, Mitt will nominate judges in the mold of Chief Justice Roberts and Justices Scalia, Thomas and Alito," it says.

Biden led the opposition to Bork's Supreme Court nomination a quarter-century ago. The court hasn't been as high on the political agenda since.

Still, the court went through one of its most contentious terms in 2011-12, concluding with its 5-4 ruling on health care and a split decision on Arizona's immigration law. Already this term, it has heard arguments on racial preferences in college admissions; cases involving gay marriage and voting rights are expected by spring.

"I think it would greatly help the president to talk about the Supreme Court," says Nan Aron of the liberal Alliance for Justice Action Campaign. Either president's appointments "will last long after he leaves office."

<a href="#">20121024-05</a>	09:29	Pam	Re: "Supreme Court Makeup Not a Top Campaign Issue" (reply to MarthaH, above)
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This whole issue has been much on my mind. And it's not just the Supreme Court that is important, though it definitely is. All the appellate judges that get appointed determine which cases make it to the Supreme Court, and they can do a lot of damage too.

I'm pretty fed up with the media (that bogeyman everyone loves to hate), and not just Fox News. Last night on CBS Bob Schieffer said the election is too close to call, that it may come down to the Electoral College, perhaps even the Supreme Court, a la GWB. It seems improper--to me at least--for a national news program to say things that are predictive, not just objective. Saying a thing can affect whether it happens or not. It almost seems as if the TV talking heads are trying to wring as much drama out of this thing as they can.

<a href="#">20121024-07</a>	09:30	SteveB	Re: "Supreme Court Makeup Not a Top Campaign Issue" (reply to Pam, above)
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I think you are so right about the media, Pam!

[20121024-13](#) 11:05 Art Re: "Supreme Court Makeup Not a Top Campaign Issue" (reply to SteveB, above)

Their business is selling news. Don't forget, that is what we honor these days—job creators.

[20121024-16](#) 11:13 Pam Re: "Supreme Court Makeup Not a Top Campaign Issue" (reply to Art, above)

Job creators. Why didn't I think of that?

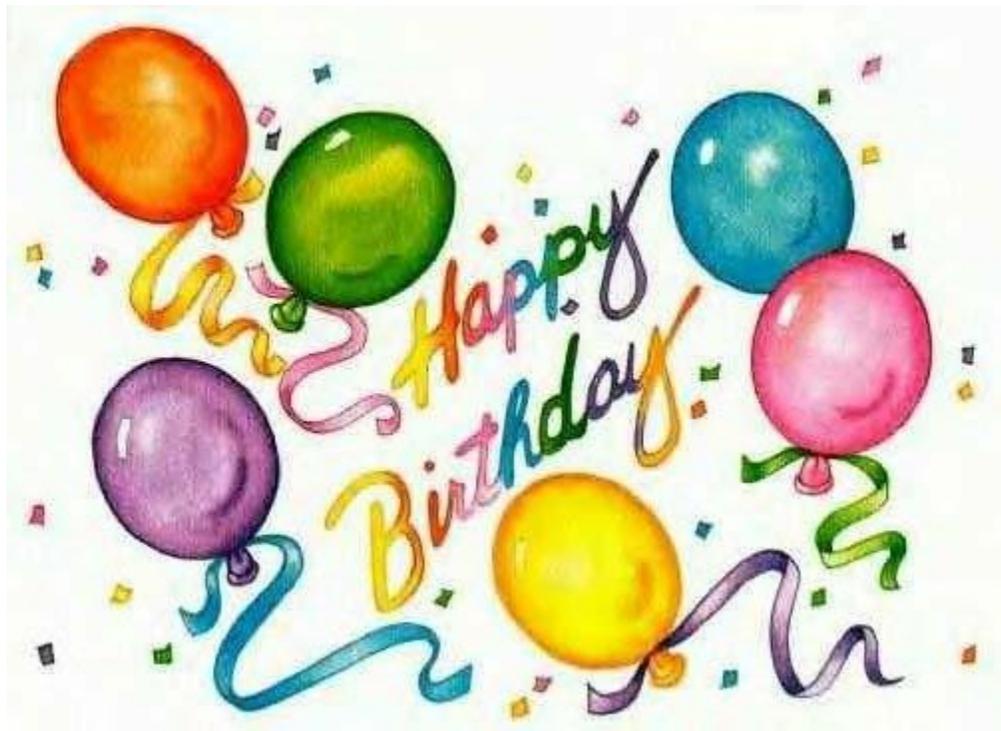
[20121024-03](#) 08:05 SteveB Happy Birthday! Thank You All!

Today marks the one year anniversary of the "official" Friends of the Middle and our FotM Newsletter. It's been a fun, interesting year, to say the least.

During the course of the year, my insistence on the importance of honesty and common courtesy has only cost me three friends (I think only three). These are people who must really, really think politics is important, so I love that we reached them at least a little. I guess they weren't really real friends anyway... Truth is what's important.

To all of you who have contributed to and/or followed this enterprise, I thank you from the bottom of my heart for all your efforts and interest.

As Superman said, may truth always triumph!



[20121024-08](#) 09:52 Pam Re: Happy Birthday! Thank You All! (reply to SteveB, above)

Yaaay!!!!

20121024-15 11:11 Art Re: Happy Birthday! Thank You All! (reply to SteveB, above)

Well done, SIR!!! Happy Birthday indeed! Think how many new friends you made.

20121024-04 08:21 MarthaH Fw: British Humour

BRITISH HUMOUR IS DIFFERENT

These are classified ads, which were actually placed in U.K. Newspapers:

FREE YORKSHIRE TERRIER

8 years old, Hateful little bastard. Bites!

FREE PUPPIES

1/2 Cocker Spaniel, 1/2 sneaky neighbor's dog.

FREE PUPPIES

Mother is a Kennel Club registered German Shepherd.

Father is a Super Dog, able to leap tall fences in a single bound.

COWS, CALVES: NEVER BRED

Also 1 gay bull for sale.

JOINING NUDIST COLONY!

Must sell washer and dryer 💎100.

WEDDING DRESS FOR SALE

Worn once, by mistake. Call Stephanie.

And the WINNER is...

FOR SALE BY OWNER.

Complete set of Encyclopaedia Britannica, 45 volumes.

Excellent condition, €200 or best offer.

No longer needed, got married, wife knows everything.

(Statement of the Century)

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Thought from the Greatest Living Scottish Thinker, Billy Connolly:

"If women are so bloody perfect at multitasking, how come they can't have a headache and sex at the same time?"

---

Children Are Quick

TEACHER: Why are you late?

STUDENT: Class started before I got here.

TEACHER: John, why are you doing your math multiplication on the floor?

JOHN: You told me to do it without using tables.

TEACHER: Glenn, how do you spell 'crocodile?' GLENN: K-R-O-K-O-D-I-A-L'

TEACHER: No, that's wrong

GLENN: Maybe it is wrong, but you asked me how I spell it. (I Love this child)

TEACHER: Donald, what is the chemical formula for water?

DONALD: H I J K L M N O.

TEACHER: What are you talking about?

DONALD: Yesterday you said it's H to O.

TEACHER: Winnie, name one important thing we have today that we didn't have ten years ago.

WINNIE: Me!

TEACHER: Glen, why do you always get so dirty?

GLEN: Well, I'm a lot closer to the ground than you are.

TEACHER: Millie, give me a sentence starting with "I".

MILLIE: I is...

TEACHER: No, Millie, always say, "I am."

MILLIE: All right...I am the ninth letter of the alphabet.

TEACHER: George Washington not only chopped down his father's cherry tree, but also admitted it. Now, Louie, do you know why his father didn't punish him?

LOUIS: Because George still had the axe in his hand?

TEACHER: Now, Simon, tell me frankly, do you say prayers before eating?

SIMON: No sir, I don't have to, my Mom is a good cook.

TEACHER: Clyde, your composition on 'My Dog' is exactly the same as your brother's.. Did you copy his?

CLYDE: No, sir. It's the same dog. (I want to adopt this kid!!!)

TEACHER: What do you call a person who keeps on talking when people are no longer interested?

HAROLD: A teacher

[20121024-09](#) 09:55 Pam Re: British Humour (reply to MarthaH, above)

I LOVE these. Are those really newspaper ads? They're great.

[20121024-14](#) 11:08 Art Re: British Humour (reply to MarthaH, above)

Good ones!

[20121024-11](#) 10:32 Ben Re: "International Monitors at U.S. Polling Spots Draw Criticism from Voter Fraud Groups" (reply to Tom, FotM Newsletter #254)

Tom: "I wonder if they will be at that polling place in Philadelphia, where, in 2008, the New Black Panthers were making comments about "white crackers," while playing with their billy clubs?"

Probably not, but as long as we remain free, you may send someone.

[20121024-20](#) 13:52 Ben Photos: Yesterday's & Today's Seafood Lunches at Apple

Apologies, but have too much on my plate to do much more than ship the photos:

Today's Seared Spiced Gulf Black Drum over barley with root vegetables (celery root, golden beets, onions, carrots) with house-made garlic mayo (wow, was THAT stuff rich and yummy!):



Here's yesterday's absolutely awesome green curry shrimp over white rice, with Faith's incredibly succulent "Marathon Chocolate" cake:



"The Donald' Trumps Even Himself for Idiocy" by Oliver Burkeman, *The Guardian*

Oct. 24, 2012, (<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2012/oct/24/election-diary-donald-trump?newsfeed=true>)



(Billionaire finally launches his 'devastating' bombshell; Romnesia and the Obamastare; and Lindsay Lohan is the undecided.)

Possibly the least credible statement in the election campaign so far – and that's an extremely crowded field – appeared on the Facebook page of angry multimillionaire and windfarm-hating germophobe Donald Trump, in advance of what he promised would be a gamechanging "October Surprise" revelation about Barack Obama. "This is not a media event or about Donald J Trump," he wrote – a claim that, if true, would have made it unique in his professional career. "This is about the United States of America." Oh, but it very much was about Donald J Trump – and far from being a gamechanging revelation, the much reported revelation, when it finally came, wasn't even a revelation. It was a two-and-three-quarter-minute YouTube video in which the mogul, sitting behind a desk and seemingly channelling the spirit of a Bond villain, offered Obama "a deal I don't believe he can refuse."

It was this: "If Obama opens up and gives his college records and applications, and if he gives his passport applications and record, I will give to a charity of his choice ... a cheque, immediately, for \$5m (£3.1m)." And so the political media slunk away, feeling soiled that they'd let Trump manipulate them so easily, and swearing not to be so gullible again. After all, they'd already fallen for an earlier alleged "October Surprise", when a website with the address Octsurprise.com appeared online, displaying a countdown clock and promising a devastating scoop, only to fizzle out in a lame joke. They weren't about to let that happen a third time. Besides, there was an important story to cover: the celebrity feminist lawyer Gloria Allred, Trump's opposite in almost every sense except in her enthusiasm for self promotion, announced that she'd soon be revealing material damaging to Mitt Romney. It was rumoured to concern testimony he'd given in the 1990s divorce case between the founder of Staples, in which Romney's Bain Capital had invested, and his wife. Could this be the long awaited October Surprise? It's about time we had one of them.

Whatever the so-called experts may claim, everyone knows that American presidential elections are won or lost on the strength of each side's bad puns. Judging by the frequency with which it's deployed, the Obama campaign's "Romnesia" gag must be working wonders. By contrast, the efforts by some Romney supporters to describe the president's facial expression during Monday night's debate as the "Obamastare" don't seem to be catching on. So Republicans should be thankful for a coinage by the conservative commentator Michelle Malkin, "hate couture", which refers to the scandalous fact that people in the fashion industry tend to vote Democratic, and that Diane von Furstenberg made a joke at a recent event about how Republicans weren't allowed.

Fox News has a more elaborate conspiracy theory: "Is [*Vogue* editor] Anna Wintour pressuring designers to steer clear of Ann Romney?" Wintour is a generous Obama backer, but the evidence is pretty thin, consisting primarily of the fact that Von Furstenberg's team haven't responded enthusiastically to Romney wearing their designs. If Fox has it right, though, these could be dangerous times for Isaac Mizrahi, who brazenly defied Wintour by telling an interviewer: "I would love to see Ann Romney in more of my clothes." If he's never heard from again, we'll know why.

Who are the mysterious undecided voters on whom the outcome of this election, and possibly the fate of the planet, now rests? Well, one of them seems to be the drama-prone actor Lindsay Lohan. She previously claimed to be supporting Romney, then, during Monday's debate, retweeted a pro-Obama message. Then she deleted it. Then she tweeted congratulations to both candidates for their "nice work", and suggested that the "severe anxiety" she'd been feeling during their encounter might have exceeded their own. Not that it'll matter: according to investigations by the website E! Online, she's probably not registered to vote.

<a href="#">20121024-23</a> 16:38 Lianne Eisenhower's "Cross of Iron" Speech
--

Thought you would like this excerpt. This is the part of the speech by Eisenhower that I mentioned. Amazing.

Every gun that is made, every warship launched, every rocket fired signifies, in the final sense, a theft from those who hunger and are not fed, those who are cold and are not clothed.

This world in arms is not spending money alone.

It is spending the sweat of its laborers, the genius of its scientists, the hopes of its children.

The cost of one modern heavy bomber is this: a modern brick school in more than 30 cities.

It is two electric power plants, each serving a town of 60,000 population.

It is two fine, fully equipped hospitals.

It is some 50 miles of concrete highway.

We pay for a single fighter with a half million bushels of wheat.

We pay for a single destroyer with new homes that could have housed more than 8,000 people.

This, I repeat, is the best way of life to be found on the road the world has been taking.

This is not a way of life at all, in any true sense. Under the cloud of threatening war, it is humanity hanging from a cross of iron.

Complete speech: <http://www.informationclearinghouse.info/article9743.htm>.

20121024-24 19:31 Bob&BettyW Fw: Future Terrorism
---

[Source of original email unknown. -SteveB]

THIS IS SOME SERIOUS NEWS. IF WHAT I HEARD IS CORRECT NOV 9TH IS A DAY ISLAM CELEBRATES.

Whether or not you heed this advice is up to you, but please read it before deleting it. This man's whole life is fighting terrorism.....and Israel knows about terrorism!!! Read what he says about the U.S. being outdated and where they will likely "strike" the next time..... no more taking airplanes!!!

Advice from an Israeli Agent

Juval Aviv was the Israeli Agent upon whom the movie ' Munich ' was based. He was Golda Meir's bodyguard -- she appointed him to track down and bring to justice the Palestinian terrorists who took the Israeli athletes hostage and killed them during the Munich Olympic Games.

In a lecture in New York City, he shared information that EVERY American needs to know -- but that our government has not yet shared with us.

He predicted the London subway bombing on the Bill O'Reilly show on Fox News, stating publicly that it would happen within a week. At the time, O'Reilly laughed and mocked him saying that in a week he wanted him back on the show. But, unfortunately, within a week the terrorist attack had occurred. Juval Aviv gave intelligence (via what he had gathered in Israel and the Middle East ) to the Bush Administration about 9/11 a month before it occurred. His report specifically said they would use planes as bombs and target high profile buildings and monuments.

Congress has since hired him as a security consultant.

Now for his future predictions. He predicts the next terrorist attack on the U.S. Will occur within the next few months. Forget hijacking airplanes, because he says terrorists will NEVER try and hijack a plane again as they know the people onboard will never go down quietly again. Aviv believes our airport security is a joke -- that we have been reactionary, rather than proactive in developing strategies that are truly effective.

For example:

1. Our airport technology is outdated.. We look for metal, and the new explosives are made of plastic.
2. He talked about how some idiot tried to light his shoe on fire. Because of that, now everyone has to take off their shoes. A group of idiots tried to bring aboard liquid explosives. Now we can't bring liquids on board.. He says he's waiting for some suicidal maniac to pour liquid explosive on his underwear; at which point, security will have us all traveling naked! Every strategy we have is 'reactionary.'
3. We only focus on security when people are heading to the gates.

Aviv says that if a terrorist attack targets airports in the future, they will target busy times on the front end of the airport when/where people are checking in. It would be easy for someone to take two suitcases of explosives, walk up to a busy check-in line, ask a person next to them to watch their bags for a minute while they run to the restroom or get a drink, and then detonate the bags BEFORE security even gets involved.. In Israel , security checks bags BEFORE people can even ENTER the airport. Aviv says the next terrorist attack here in America is imminent and will involve suicide bombers and non-suicide bombers in places where large groups of people congregate. (I.e., Disneyland, Las Vegas casinos, big cities (New York, San Francisco, Chicago, etc..)) and that it will also include shopping malls, subways in rush hour, train stations, etc., as well as rural America this time (Wyoming, Montana, etc.).

The attack will be characterized by simultaneous detonations around the country (terrorists like big impact), involving at least 5-8 cities, including rural areas.

Aviv says terrorists won't need to use suicide bombers in many of the larger cities, because at places like the MGM Grand in Las Vegas , they can simply valet park a car loaded with explosives and walk away. Aviv says all of the above is well known in intelligence circles, but that our U. S. Government does not want to 'alarm American citizens' with the facts. The world is quickly going to become 'a different place', and issues like 'global warming' and political correctness will become totally irrelevant.

On an encouraging note, he says that Americans don't have to be concerned about being nuked. Aviv says the terrorists who want to destroy America will not use sophisticated weapons. They like to use suicide as a front-line approach. It's cheap, it's easy, it's effective; and they have an infinite abundance of young militants more than willing to 'meet their destiny'.

He also says the next level of terrorists, over which America should be most concerned, will not be coming from abroad.. But will be, instead, 'homegrown' -- having attended and been educated in our own schools and universities right here in the U. S. He says to look for 'students' who frequently travel back and forth to the Middle East .. These young terrorists will be most dangerous because they will know our language and will fully understand the habits of Americans; but that we Americans won't know/understand a thing about them.

Aviv says that, as a people, Americans are unaware and uneducated about the terrorist threats we will, inevitably, face. America still has only have a handful of Arabic and Farsi speaking people in our intelligence networks, and Aviv says it is critical that we change that fact SOON. So, what can America do to protect itself? From an intelligence perspective, Aviv says the U.S. needs to stop relying on satellites and technology for intelligence. We need to, instead, follow Israel 's, Ireland 's and England 's hands-on examples of human intelligence, both from an infiltration perspective as well as to trust 'aware' citizens to help. We need to engage and educate ourselves as citizens; however, our U. S. government continues to treat us, its citizens, 'like babies'. Our government thinks we 'can't handle the truth' and are concerned that& ;nbs p;we'll panic if we understand the realities of terrorism. Aviv says this is a deadly mistake.

Aviv recently created/executed a security test for our Congress, by placing an empty briefcase in five well-traveled spots in five major cities. The results? Not one person called 911 or sought a policeman to check it out. In fact, in Chicago , someone tried to steal the briefcase! In comparison, Aviv says that citizens of Israel are so well 'trained' that an unattended bag or package would be reported in seconds by citizen(s) who know to publicly shout, 'Unattended Bag!' The area would be quickly & calmly cleared by the citizens themselves. But, unfortunately, America hasn't been yet 'hurt enough' by terrorism for their government to fully understand the need to educate its citizens or for the government to understand that it's their citizens who are, inevitably, the best first-line of defense against terrorism.

Aviv also was concerned about the high number of children here in America who were in preschool and kindergarten after 9/11, who were 'lost' without parents being able to pick them up, and about our schools that had no plan in place to best care for the students until parents could get there (in New York City, this was days, in some cases!).

He stresses the importance of having a plan, that's agreed upon within your family, to respond to in the event of a terrorist emergency. He urges parents to contact their children's schools and demand that the schools, too, develop plans of actions, as they do in Israel .

Does your family know what to do if you can't contact one another by phone? Where would you gather in an emergency? He says we should all have a plan that is easy enough for even our youngest children to remember and follow.

Aviv says that the U. S. government has in force a plan that, in the event of another terrorist attack, will immediately cut-off EVERYONE's ability to use cell phones, blackberries, etc., as this is the preferred communication source used by terrorists and is often the way that their bombs are detonated.

How will you communicate with your loved ones in the event you cannot speak? You need to have a plan. If you believe what you have just read, then you must feel compelled to send to every concerned parent or guardian, grandparents, uncles, aunts, whatever and whomever.

If you understand, and believe what you have just read, then you must feel compelled to send this to every concerned parent, guardian, grandparents, uncles, aunts, whomever. Don't stop there. In addition to sharing this via e-mail, contact and discuss this information with whomever it makes sense to. Make contingency plans with those you care about. Better that you have plans in place, and never have to use them, than to have no plans in place, and find you needed them.

If you choose not to share this, or not to have a plan in place, and nothing ever occurs -- good for you! Telling yourself after the fact, "I should have sent this to so and so, but deleted it as so much trash from old Bill Jones, plus, I just didn't believe it", will not change anything. You were alerted, had the chance to do something, and instead of erring on the side of caution, you chose to disregard, if nothing else, a sensible, valuable warning.

<a href="#">20121024-26</a> 21:55 SteveB Re: Future Terrorism (Reply to Bob&BettyW, above)
--

I wouldn't worry too much. This email has been circulating since, at least, July, 2007 or even 2005, so any predictions are slightly out of kilter.

Read: [http://urbanlegends.about.com/od/errata/a/juval\\_aviv.htm](http://urbanlegends.about.com/od/errata/a/juval_aviv.htm).

A 2006 article in *The Guardian* reported that "Aviv never served in Mossad, or any Israeli intelligence organisation," and "his nearest approximation to spy work was as a lowly gate guard for the airline El Al in New York in the early '70s."

And: <http://www.snopes.com/rumors/soapbox/juvalaviv.asp>.

<a href="#">20121024-25</a> 20:05 Marissa Re: 'Where Do We Come From, Grandpa?' (reply to SteveB, FotM Newsletter #252)
---

Thank you, Dad, for including Malaya in your *FotM Newsletter*. I will definitely let her read it when she is old enough to understand. I read it with Pete and we both agree that you are right on point with what we want to teach her. We are going to teach her about all religions and raise her in a spiritual household that is open to conversation and based on truth. I hope the cookie shop is going well. I would love to try some if you are able to bring them when you come. Malaya and I are doing well and I am actually getting lots of sleep. She is a very good and peaceful little baby. I can't wait for you to meet her :)



## Starvation can lead to health hazards

DEAR DR. DONOHUE: My weight is totally over the top. I am 5 feet 7 inches tall and weigh close to 300 pounds. I was average weight in high school but now it's difficult to meet daily protein, vitamin and mineral requirements.



Get to a dietitian for diet advice that provides for essential nutrients while paring down calorie intake sensibly. Your local hospital should be able to put you on the track of one. Combine this with an exercise

## Rally against apathy draws small crowd

OKLAHOMA CITY (AP) — Organizers had high hopes for a rally Saturday to battle apathy in civic life, but the event drew only a fraction of the anticipated crowd.

Thomas Payne, a spokesman for the Coalition of Civic Leadership, said he was hoping for about 25,000 participants to hear four hours of entertainment, poetry, songs and speeches.

Instead, the rally drew about 300 people, many of whom were security guards, petition circula-

tes, reporters and campaign workers handing out pamphlets.

"We understand that we had a tragic incident, and sometimes these types of incidents deter people from mass assemblies," Payne said, referring to the bombing that rocked the Olympic Games in Atlanta early Saturday, killing two people and injuring at least 130 others.

Another reason for the low turnout, Payne said, was just what his group is trying to battle — ap-

athy.

"Still, he was optimistic. "This is a beginning, not an end," Payne said.

The rally began with a march from Ralph Ellison Library to the Capitol steps a few blocks north. Payne said he was expecting groups from Stillwater, Tulsa, Lawton, Enid and Muskogee.

Payne said organizers started planning the rally in April to "motivate, reclaim and renew our community."

## Total lunar eclipse will be broadcast live on Northwoods Public Radio

If you're a stargazer, join KAXE 91.7 FM for a special skywatch on Sunday evening, Nov. 28. A spectacular view of the total lunar eclipse is predicted for northern Minnesota. KAXE and Itasca Community College physics professor Aaron Wenger will

If it's cloudy, call the station first for more information.

KAXE will broadcast the stargazing, and Wenger's comments about the lunar eclipse, live on 91.7 FM, beginning around midnight.

KAXE 91.7 FM is Northwoods Public Radio, a 17-

### POLICE LOG

## Police arrest everyone on February 22nd

The following is a partial list of the Norton Police Department's police log.

Sunday, Feb. 18

1:36 a.m. — Officer reported checking out subjects on foot on



## Parents keep kids home to protest school closure

SAN FRANCISCO (AP) — Parents kept 200 elementary school students home from school for an entire day in a parent-organized protest of the district's plans to close the school.

Monday's boycott included

up even though most of the students didn't, and that it was largely business as usual for the remaining students who studied in small classes.

"I know I'm the principal," she said. "But I'm not going to

<http://www.history.com/photos/allied-military-leaders/photo2>



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

You can subscribe to this free, no-obligation, daily Newsletter filled with lively, intelligent discussion centered on politics and government, but ranging to anything members feel is important, interesting, or entertaining. To subscribe, use the form on our website or blog, or simply reply to this email with "Yes" or "Start" in the Subject line, then add our email address (below) to your Contacts or Safe list. To opt-out, reply with "No" or "Stop" in the subject line.

Welcome to all our new members who may be here for the first time. We want to hear from YOU! To submit your comment, you can use the form on our website or blog, or reply to this email with your two cents worth. Be sure to sign with your desired user name.

Your email address will always be kept strictly confidential.

Feel free to forward this Newsletter to anyone you know on the Right or the Left, though your motives might be different in each case. Regardless, PASS IT ON! Help keep your friends and acquaintances informed and thinking.

<http://www.FriendsOfTheMiddle.org>  
[FriendsOfTheMiddle@hotmail.com](mailto:FriendsOfTheMiddle@hotmail.com)

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# FRIENDS OF THE MIDDLE NEWSLETTER #256 — OCT. 26, 2012

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

**INDEX: Click here.**

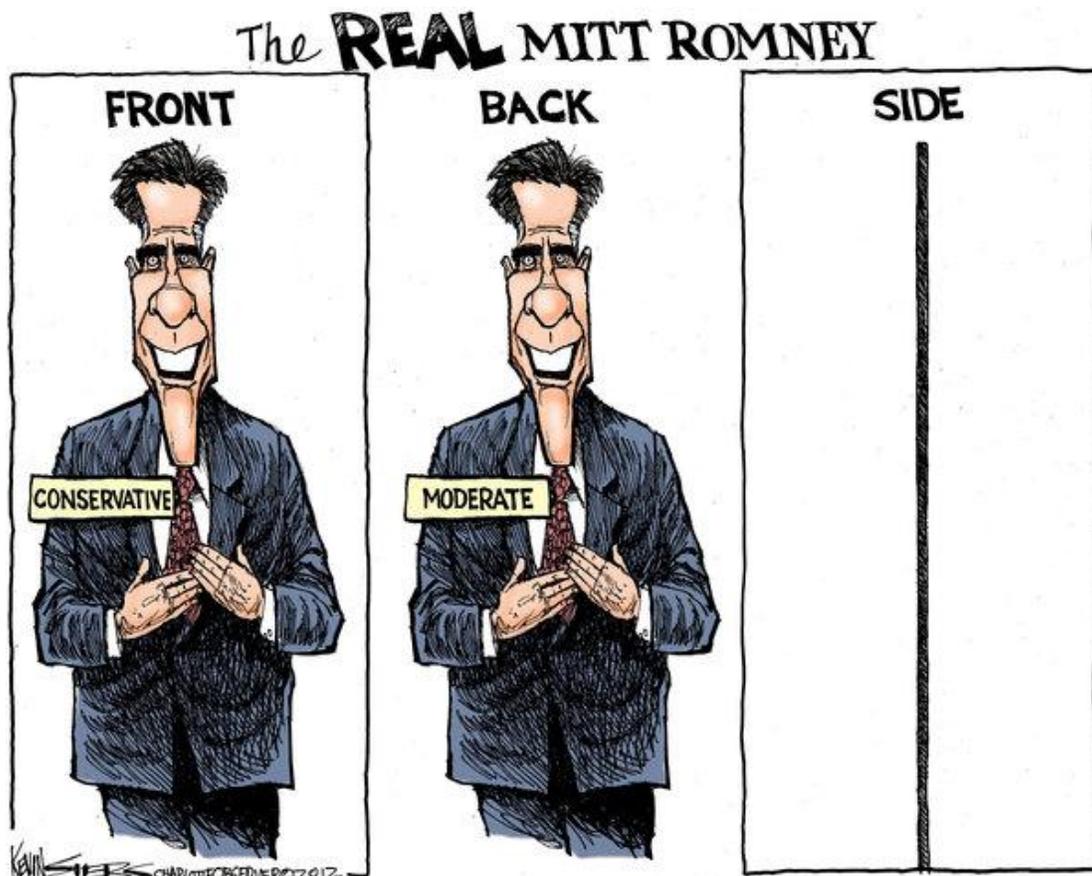
## 'Who Is This Guy?'

(posted by Steven W. Baker / SteveB, Oct. 26, 2012)

If any newspaper in the country should be endorsing Mitt Romney, you'd think it would be the *The Salt Lake City Tribune*. After all, it's the capital city of the Mormons and the place where Romney allegedly saved an Olympics. Yet here they are endorsing the President. Their reasoning seems impeccable to me.

"Tribune Endorsement: Too Many Mitts" by The Salt Lake City Tribune

Oct. 19, 2012, Updated Oct. 24, 2012, (<http://www.sltrib.com/sltrib/opinion/55019844-82/endorsement-romney-obama-president.html.csp>)



(Obama has earned another term,)

Nowhere has Mitt Romney's pursuit of the presidency been more warmly welcomed or closely followed than here in Utah. The Republican nominee's political and religious pedigrees, his adeptly bipartisan governorship of a Democratic state, and his head for business and the bottom line all inspire admiration and hope in our largely Mormon, Republican, business-friendly state.

But it was Romney's singular role in rescuing Utah's organization of the 2002 Olympics from a cesspool of scandal, and his oversight of the most successful Winter Games on record, that make him the Beehive State's favorite adopted son. After all, Romney managed to save the state from ignominy, turning the extravaganza into a showcase for the matchless landscapes, volunteerism and efficiency that told the world what is best and most beautiful about Utah and its people.

In short, this is the Mitt Romney we knew, or thought we knew, as one of us.

Sadly, it is not the only Romney, as his campaign for the White House has made abundantly clear, first in his servile courtship of the tea party in order to win the nomination, and now as the party's shape-shifting nominee. From his embrace of the party's radical right wing, to subsequent portrayals of himself as a moderate champion of the middle class, Romney has raised the most frequently asked question of the campaign: **"Who is this guy, really, and what in the world does he truly believe?"**

The evidence suggests no clear answer, or at least one that would survive Romney's next speech or sound bite. Politicians routinely tailor their words to suit an audience. Romney, though, is shameless, lavishing vastly diverse audiences with words, any words, they would trade their votes to hear.

More troubling, Romney has repeatedly refused to share specifics of his radical plan to simultaneously reduce the debt, get rid of Obamacare (or, as he now says, only part of it), make a voucher program of Medicare, slash taxes and spending, and thereby create millions of new jobs. To claim, as Romney does, that he would offset his tax and spending cuts (except for billions more for the military) by doing away with tax deductions and exemptions is utterly meaningless without identifying which and how many would get the ax. Absent those specifics, his promise of a balanced budget simply does not pencil out.

If this portrait of a Romney willing to say anything to get elected seems harsh, we need only revisit his branding of 47 percent of Americans as freeloaders who pay no taxes, yet feel victimized and entitled to government assistance. His job, he told a group of wealthy donors, "is not to worry about those people. I'll never convince them they should take personal responsibility and care for their lives."

Where, we ask, is the pragmatic, inclusive Romney, the Massachusetts governor who left the state with a model health care plan in place, the Romney who led Utah to Olympic glory? That Romney skedaddled and is nowhere to be found.

And what of the president Romney would replace? For four years, President Barack Obama has attempted, with varying degrees of success, to pull the nation out of its worst financial meltdown since the Great Depression, a deepening crisis he inherited the day he took office.

In the first months of his presidency, Obama acted decisively to stimulate the economy. His leadership was essential to passage of the badly needed American Recovery and Reinvestment Act. Though Republicans criticize the stimulus for failing to create jobs, it clearly helped stop the hemorrhaging of public sector jobs. The Utah Legislature used hundreds of millions in stimulus funds to plug holes in the state's budget.

The president also acted wisely to bail out the auto industry, which has since come roaring back. Romney, in so many words, said the carmakers should sink if they can't swim.

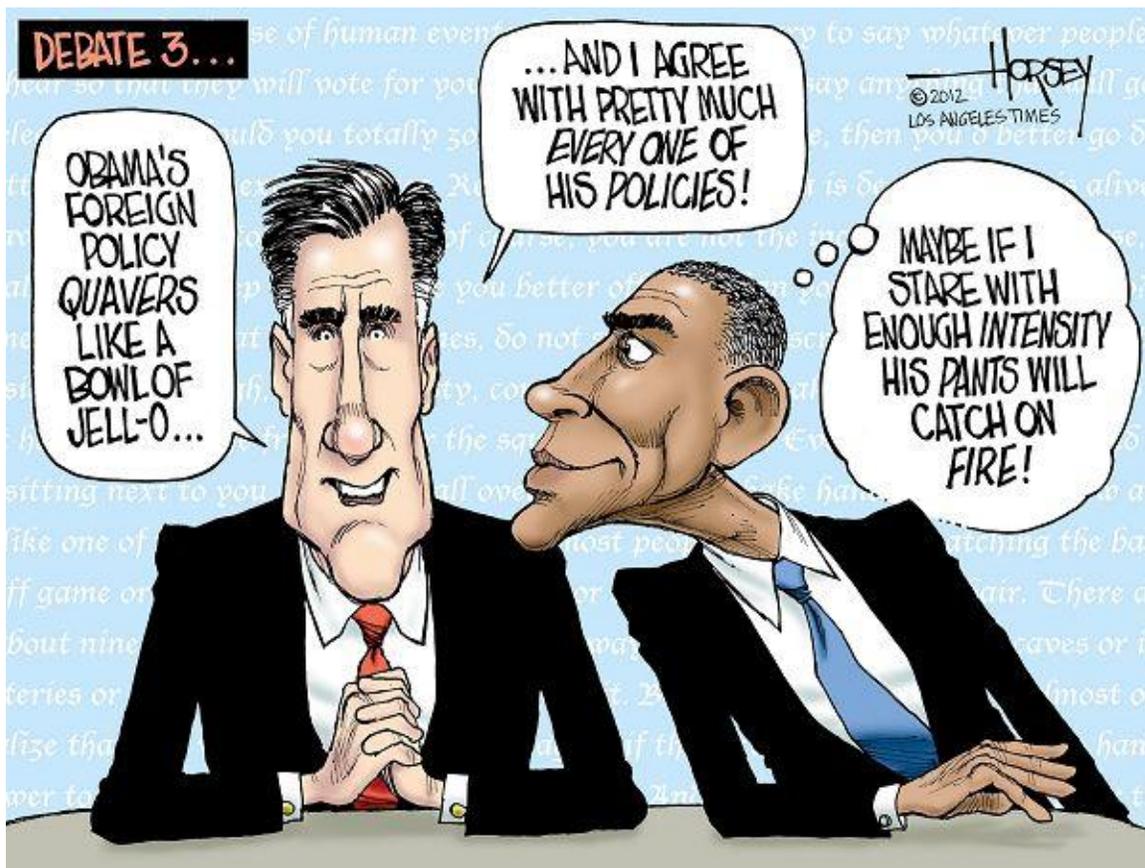
Obama's most noteworthy achievement, passage of his signature Affordable Care Act, also proved, in its timing, his greatest blunder. The set of comprehensive health insurance reforms aimed at extending health care coverage to all

Americans was signed 14 months into his term after a ferocious fight in Congress that sapped the new president's political capital and destroyed any chance for bipartisan cooperation on the shredded economy.

Obama's foreign policy record is perhaps his strongest suit, especially compared to Romney's bellicose posture toward Russia and China and his inflammatory rhetoric regarding Iran's nuclear weapons program. Obama's measured reliance on tough economic embargoes to bring Iran to heel, and his equally measured disengagement from the war in Afghanistan, are examples of a nuanced approach to international affairs. The glaring exception, still unfolding, was the administration's failure to protect the lives of the U.S. ambassador to Libya and three other Americans, and to quickly come clean about it.

In considering which candidate to endorse, *The Salt Lake Tribune* editorial board had hoped that Romney would exhibit the same talents for organization, pragmatic problem solving and inspired leadership that he displayed here more than a decade ago. Instead, we have watched him morph into a friend of the far right, then tack toward the center with breathtaking aplomb. Through a pair of presidential debates, Romney's domestic agenda remains bereft of detail and worthy of mistrust.

Therefore, our endorsement must go to the incumbent, a competent leader who, against tough odds, has guided the country through catastrophe and set a course that, while rocky, is pointing toward a brighter day. The president has earned a second term. Romney, in whatever guise, does not deserve a first.



Smells fishy...

[This is a great example of how ugly it gets! We have to somehow get rid of this corruption! –SteveB]

"Obscure Nonprofit Threatens Campaign Finance Limits Beyond Montana" by Paul Abowd, The Center for Public Integrity

Oct. 22, 2012, (<http://www.publicintegrity.org/2012/10/22/11577/obscure-nonprofit-threatens-campaign-finance-limits-beyond-montana>)

(Records show furniture chain owner pledged \$300,000 to ATP.)

Jacob "Jake" Jabs is not quite a national figure, but he is a celebrity in Colorado — so much so that he was featured in the animated comedy series "South Park," which is set in the state.

Voters haven't had a clue who is behind American Tradition Partnership — the Colorado-based group pushing to rewrite Montana's campaign finance laws — and that's just the way the secretive nonprofit wants it.

A 2010 fundraising pitch to its donors promised that "no politician, no bureaucrat, and no radical environmentalist will ever know you helped," and "the only thing we plan on reporting is our success to contributors like you."

"Montana has very strict limits on contributions to candidates," reads the document, obtained by The Center for Public Integrity. "but there is no limit to how much you give to this program."

As for the state's ban on corporate money in elections?

"Corporate contributions are completely legal," the pitch assures potential funders. "This is one of the rare programs you will find where that's the case."

"You can get some traction with that pitch," says Dennis Unsworth, who led the state's investigation of the group in 2010 that unearthed the document. "If you can offer to influence the elections outside the law, that's a great calling card."

For three election cycles, ATP has plastered the state with mailers attacking "radical environmental groups" and moderate Republicans.

While ATP's funders are still mostly a mystery, the Center for Public Integrity has identified what records indicate is the secretive organization's founding donor — an anti-union owner of Colorado's largest furniture chain — and discovered a long list of affiliations with national tea party groups funded by the conservative billionaire Koch brothers.

This election, ATP has vowed to keep Attorney General Steve Bullock out of the governor's mansion. In October, voters received a brazen multi-page newspaper-style flier placing the Democratic candidate in a photo lineup with three registered sex offenders.

But the group hit the national spotlight thanks to three landmark court battles with Bullock and the state of Montana.

The U.S. Supreme Court in the *Citizens United* decision invalidated a federal ban on corporate spending similar to what 24 states had on their books, but Montana held fast to its law. ATP sued to overturn it, losing to Bullock in the state's high court. But in June, the nonprofit prevailed on appeal to the nation's highest court.

ATP is pushing past its *Citizens United* challenge with two more suits to eliminate Montana's low contribution limits and disclosure rules, setting up a potential challenge to contribution limits nationwide.

### Tea party ties

One of ATP's founders is former Montana Congressman Ron Marlenee, who served from 1977 until the state dropped from two House seats to one in 1992. Marlenee used his D.C. Rolodex to raise money for the fledgling pro-energy group, which registered in Colorado in 2008.

Marlenee rallied a tea party crowd in Bozeman in 2010, appearing on stage with a half-burned American flag, which he said he wrestled away from a "liberal Marxist" protester.

ATP has joined tea party lobbying efforts, signing at least two letters to Congress in the last year urging an end to an end to tax credits for wind power and natural gas-fueled vehicles. The letters were signed by Koch-funded groups including Americans for Prosperity and tea party boosters FreedomWorks, Club for Growth and Art Pope's John Locke Foundation.

In its 2008 application for tax-exempt status as a 501(c)(4) "social welfare" organization, ATP listed its "primary donor" as Jacob Jabs, Colorado's largest furniture retailer and a donor to Republican candidates and causes. Jabs pledged a \$300,000 contribution to get ATP on its feet, according to IRS records obtained by the Center for Public Integrity.

Jabs, through a spokeswoman, on Monday said he did not make a donation and has "never heard of" ATP or the group's previous incarnation.

"He did not commit to the funds indicated by Athena Dalton in the filing so clearly he did not give them funds," wrote Charlie Shaulis, director of communications for American Furniture Warehouse, Jabs' company, in an email to I-News Network in Colorado.

Dalton wrote a letter to the IRS asking the agency to speed up the process for awarding it nonprofit status. The letter states that the approval was needed quickly, otherwise Jabs would not make a contribution. The agency gave it the thumbs up four days later.

The amount of the gift would be double Jabs' total federal campaign contributions since 1997, which have gone exclusively to Republican candidates and party organizations, according to FEC records.

Jabs also poured money into a failed "right to work" ballot initiative in Colorado, becoming a television spokesman for the 2008 anti-union effort.

ATP shares resources and a D.C. mailing address with an affiliated 501(c)(3) educational nonprofit called the American Tradition Institute, which works in tandem with a network of Koch-funded think tanks to oppose wind energy and dispute the reality of climate change. It has launched lawsuits against state mandates for renewable energy usage and targeted climate scientists in academia.

The libertarian Koch brothers, Charles and David, have become better known in recent years with the rise of the tea party. They are principal owners of Koch Industries Inc., the second-largest privately owned company in the U.S., with major investments in the energy industry.

ATI has accepted donations from the Atlas Economic Research Foundation, a free-market think tank underwritten by Exxon Mobil and Koch foundation money, according to a report by the Institute for Southern Studies.

Its director of litigation Chris Horner is also a fellow at the Competitive Enterprise Institute, a free-market think tank that has taken a half-million dollars from Koch foundations since 1998, according to the report.

'We won't be shut up, or shut down'

In 2008, American Tradition Partnership flooded the state with mailers attacking ten state legislators, but reported only \$12,000 in spending for the entire election.

An investigation by the state's Commission on Political Practices concluded that the group had broken state law requiring outside spending groups to register as political action committees and disclose all donors and spending.

Commissioner Unsworth concluded in October 2010 that ATP had registered a "sham organization" called the Coalition for Energy and Environment and vastly under-reported its activity. The PAC's reported spending, said the state, would have barely covered the cost of postage for the raft of glossy, full-color mailers ATP sent out.

ATP filed forms with the IRS the same year, reporting more than \$660,000 in spending.

ATP maintains that its spending on mailers, most targeting moderate Republicans running for state legislative seats, is "educational" and therefore falls outside the state's definition of "express advocacy" that would require it to disclose its funders and its spending on the mailers.

ATP did not face penalties and did not disband. Instead, it changed its name from Western Tradition Partnership and sued to strike down Montana's disclosure laws.

The case is set for trial in March 2013.

"We won't be shut up or shut down," ATP said in a press release in June.

Ironically, ATP's years-long court battles have pushed the group into the public spotlight, threatening the secrecy of its donors. The group has vigorously resisted discovery proceedings in court, missing several deadlines to produce evidence requested by the state.

Lawyers in Bullock's office filed a motion to compel ATP to present evidence, including bank records, or drop their lawsuit. It has not complied. According to a court filing, ATP's lawyer Jim Brown emailed the state's lawyers in late August, explaining, "I have a difficult client."

Nonetheless, the state has won access to bank records for the organization. If a judge makes them public, they could offer voters a glimpse at the group's funders.

#### 'I was the screen'

The group rarely communicates with the press and it hires unknowing lawyers to sign campaign finance reports and its 2008 nonprofit incorporation documents in Colorado.

Scott Shires has been sued and fined for his election activities, but the Colorado-based political consultant says his reputation really took a hit after he signed ATP's forms. When Montana released the results of its 2010 investigation, Shires' name began showing up in the press, and he says he cut ties to the organization.

"The operatives writing these stupid ads and mailings don't want to be identified," said Shires. "I was the screen that allowed them to hide — plausible deniability is something a lot of these groups are interested in."

Shires listed himself as "President" of ATP when he signed the group's request for exempt status with the IRS in 2008.

He is widely known for registering hundreds of political committees in Colorado, mostly Republican groups. The work involves some risk. He pleaded guilty to filing false tax returns for a client in 2008, a misdemeanor charge. He was also caught up in a scandal that linked former U.S. Rep. and 2008 Senate candidate Bob Schaffer with the beneficiary of a questionable congressional earmark.

ATP Executive Director Donald Ferguson did not return numerous calls for comment.

### 'Not really sure who is in charge'

The left-leaning Montana Conservation Voters claims ATP was unfazed by the 2010 investigation and is "right back to doing the same thing," according to the group's board member Ben Graybill, who filed the original complaint.

This year, ATP has registered a PAC in the state. It sent mailers prior to the June primary election, but has reported zero spending to the state.

Its filings are signed by Montana attorney Chris Gallus, who was "surprised" to receive a call from the Center regarding ATP. He claims no leadership role in the organization, and said he's "not really sure who is in charge."

Gallus said he has not been contacted by ATP since being hired to sign their PAC reports, and does not anticipate filing any spending reports on their behalf. "Until that changes, my involvement is the same as the date I signed their forms."

The organization sent out a questionnaire to candidates in early October, asking about their stance on land development and environmental regulations in resource-rich Montana.

"Will you oppose legislation which would categorically limit development of any specific energy resource?" reads one. "Will you oppose legislation that would rescind, reduce or shorten the tax holiday on oil & gas wells?" reads another.

Candidates who don't respond, or don't respond with answers favorable to ATP's interests, are often targeted by a direct mail campaign similar to those launched at Bullock.

Its adversary, the Montana conservation group, endorses candidates for the state legislature who align with its mission to "protect clean water, public health, and our incredible outdoor heritage." Its mid-October mailers praise Bullock for leading "the fight against corporate control of our elections."

Unlike ATP, the group reports its direct and independent spending to the state and lists its donors.

"They're scofflaws," said Theresa Keaveny, executive director of the Montana conservation group.

Keaveny says ATP is not only in violation of Montana law, but also IRS rules for c(4) groups that dictate ATP must not spend a majority of its funds on political activity.

According to its 2008 application for exempt status, obtained by the Center, ATP promised not to "spend any money attempting to influence" elections. It also promised not to "directly or indirectly participate or intervene on behalf of or in opposition to a candidate for public office."

It would, however spend "70 percent" of its time and resources to "educate citizens" about "land and resource development issues."

It also revealed the Jobs contribution.

### Governor's race a toss up

Bullock, a Democrat, is running against Republican Rick Hill. It's expected to be a close race despite Montana's majority-Republican voting population.

"We want citizens deciding elections, not corporations," said Bullock in an October debate during which he touted his record as a campaign finance crusader.

While outside spending groups, including the Republican and Democratic governors associations, have swarmed the state with ads, the two candidates have had to abide by Montana's low contribution limits — for most of the campaign.

In October, ATP made national news when a federal judge agreed with the organization and its high-profile campaign finance lawyer, James Bopp, and struck down contribution limits on individuals, PACs, and parties — including the \$630 cap on individual giving to Bullock and Hill.

"The political establishment can no longer tell citizens to shut up because they've reached their speech limit," said ATP Montana Director Doug Lair in a press release.

Montana joined the ranks of 12 other states with no limits on contributions to candidates, but only temporarily. A week later, a federal appeals court stayed the lower court decision pending a full appeal, putting the state's contribution limits back in force.

Bullock's opponent took advantage of the six-day free-for-all between the ruling and the stay, accepting a \$500,000 contribution from the state's Republican Party. The gift dwarfed Montana's \$22,600 limit on party giving to candidates.

### 'Who's saying these crazy things'

A month before the vote, Montana residents woke up to a fake newspaper on their doorstep called "*The Montana Statesman*."

The publication calls itself "the largest and most trusted news source" but is actually a series of ATP-funded attacks on Bullock. It leads with a giant headline that reads "Bullock Admits Failure."

The "news" story below claims that the attorney general has let "1 in 4 sex offenders go unregistered." It includes four photos: three registered sex offenders and Bullock.

The group can continue to raise money on the promise that "no politician, no bureaucrat, and no radical environmentalist will ever know you helped make this program possible," as its 2010 briefing to donors reads. "You can just sit back on election night and see what a difference you've made."

Unsworth says his 2010 investigation did not stop ATP, and outside spending that has already flooded the state is sure to intensify, particularly in light of the *Citizens United* decision. He calls the advertising a "mess of trash that lays at the feet of the public," paid for by "funny money with no legal constraints."

"We don't know who's saying these crazy things," he added, "so the public has to suffer and our political system suffers as a result."

Update (Oct . 22, 7:00 p.m.)

This story was updated to reflect that Jobs, through a spokesman, denied making a contribution to ATP.

(John Dunbar contributed to this report.)

<a href="#">20121025-02</a>	06:53	MarthaH	"Arizona Ballot Measure Contests Ownership of the Grand Canyon"
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Another gift, :-((((

"Arizona Ballot Measure Contests Ownership of the Grand Canyon" by Tim Gaynor, Reuters

Oct, 23, 2012, (<http://www.reuters.com/article/2012/10/23/us-arizona-ballot-lands-idUSBRE89M04T20121023>)

(PHOENIX) When voters in Arizona go to the polls next month, they will be asked to decide a landownership tug of war: Should the Grand Canyon belong to all Americans, or just the residents of Arizona?

A controversial ballot measure backed by Republicans in the state legislature is seeking sovereign control over millions of acres of federal land in the state, including the Grand Canyon.

Proposition 120 would amend the state's constitution to declare Arizona's sovereignty and jurisdiction over the "air, water, public lands, minerals, wildlife and other natural resources within the state's boundaries."

The measure is the latest salvo in the so-called "sagebrush revolt" by Republicans in the West aiming to take back control of major swaths of land owned by various federal agencies, much of it by the Interior Department's Bureau of Land Management.

State Senator Sylvia Allen, one of the Republican backers of the measure, argues that federal retention of the land hurts the economy of the Western states and leaves them struggling to fund public education, nurture their economies, and manage their forests and natural resources.

"We do not have the ability in rural Arizona to provide jobs for our citizens due to the fact that the federal government controls all the land," Allen told Reuters. "It leaves us at a great disadvantage. We're not able to bring in industry and provide for the jobs that we need," she added.

The exact area of public land targeted by the measure - which excludes American Indian reservations and federal installations such as arsenals - was not immediately clear on the Arizona Secretary of State's website.

The Sierra Club pegged the area at between 39,000 and 46,700 square miles (101,000 and 121,000 square km) - or 34 percent to 41 percent of the entire state.

The ballot measure is just the latest move in a decades-old federal-state skirmish over control of a wide range of natural resources in Western states, often pitting mining, drilling and logging companies against those seeking to protect the environment.

The efforts have had mixed success. In May, Arizona's Republican Governor Jan Brewer vetoed a state bill calling on Washington to relinquish the title to 48,000 square miles (124,000 square km), arguing that it created uncertainty for existing leaseholders on federal lands in difficult economic times.

But similar legislation was signed into law by Governor Gary Herbert in neighboring Utah in March, despite warnings from state attorneys that it was likely unconstitutional and would trigger a costly and ultimately futile legal battle.

Opponents of the latest drive to assert Arizona's ownership say that, if successful, the initiative could undermine protections provided by federal environmental laws such as the Clean Air Act, Endangered Species Act, and Clean Water Act, and would saddle Arizona with lands for which it would be unable to care.

"They can't even fund and ensure that their (state) parks are protected, so how they would take on an additional 25 to 30 million acres of land is a big question mark," Sandy Bahr, director of the Sierra Club Grand Canyon Chapter, told Reuters.

No polls have given a sense of whether Prop 120 will prosper during the November 6 election. But Bahr cautioned that, should it pass, it would inevitably trigger fresh litigation for Arizona, which recently fought a legal battle over its tough 2010 crackdown on illegal immigrants all the way to the U.S. Supreme Court.

"This one is just blatantly unconstitutional," Bahr said of Prop 120. "Does Arizona really need another lawsuit?"

[20121025-03](#)

08:51 Art

Re: "Arizona Ballot Measure Contests Ownership of the Grand Canyon"  
(reply to MarthaH, above)

Of course, what this really means is, if the States can take over, they can exploit the land for commercial purposes. It is indeed the start of the Age of Stupidity.

[20121025-04](#) 08:55 Pam Re: "Arizona Ballot Measure Contests Ownership of the Grand Canyon" (reply to MarthaH, above)

I can see it now: strip mines along the Grand Canyon--or mega townhouse developments with a killer view. This is appalling.

[20121025-05](#) 13:22 Art Re: Future Terrorism (reply to SteveB & Bob&BettyW, FotM Newsletter #255)

Good stuff as always, SteveB. The piece from Juval Aviv was an astute observation of the obvious, as I think you indicated in your follow up. Still good to have a plan, but no one yet thinks it worth the effort. It's always that way.

[20121025-06](#) 17:36 MarthaH "2012 Voters: The Deepest Racial Split Since '88"

NO surprise, huh? :-(((( SAD

"2012 Voters: The Deepest Racial Split Since '88" by Scott Clement and Jon Cohen, *The Washington Post*

Oct. 25, 2012, (<http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/the-fix/wp/2012/10/25/2012-voters-the-deepest-racial-split-since-88/>)

The 2012 election is shaping up to be more polarized along racial lines than any presidential contest since 1988, with President Obama lagging behind Republican Mitt Romney among white voters by 21 percentage points, a steep drop in support from four years ago.

As he did in 2008, Obama gets overwhelming support from non-whites, who made up a record high proportion of the overall electorate four years ago. In that contest, 80 percent of all non-whites supported Obama, including 95 percent of black voters, according to the exit poll. In the *Washington Post*-ABC News national tracking poll released Wednesday, Obama wins 79 percent of non-whites, and support for his reelection is nearly universal among African Americans.

But among whites, Obama is currently doing much worse than he did in 2008. At this stage four years ago, Obama trailed Republican John McCain by eight percentage points among white voters. Even in victory, Obama ended up losing white voters by 12 percentage points.

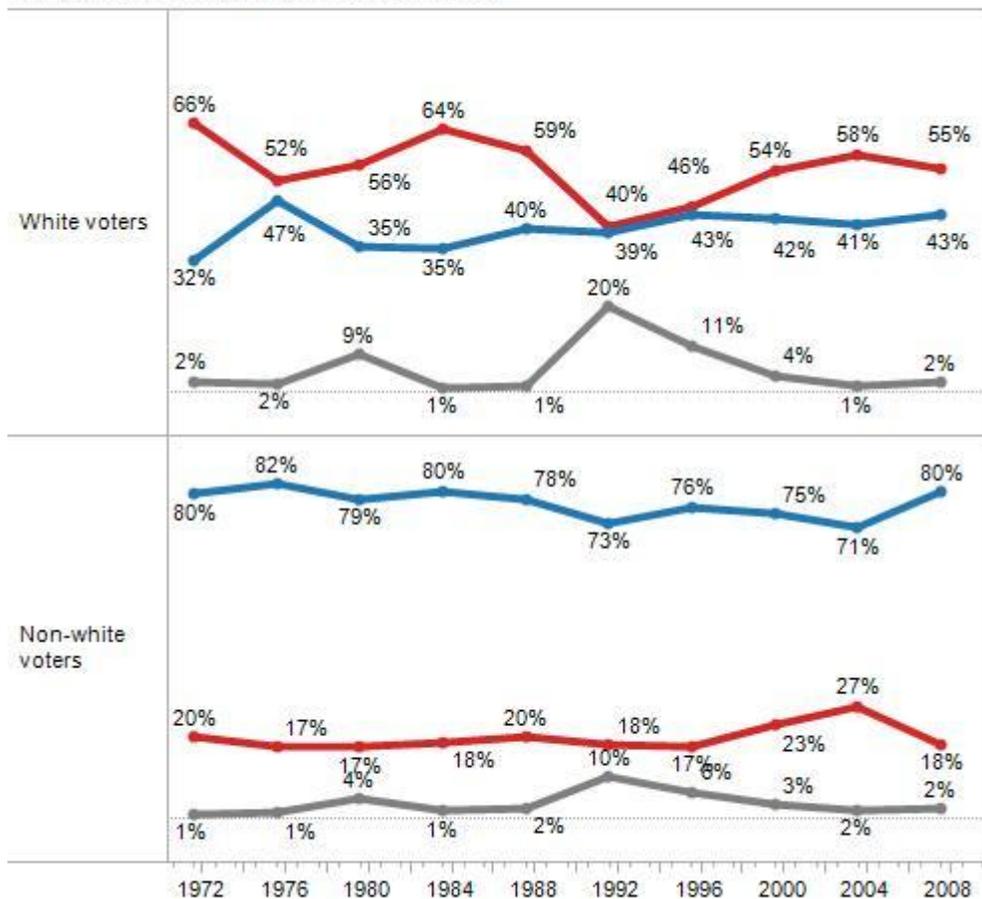
Obama's current 21-percent-deficit — he trails Romney 59 to 38 percent — would be far harder to overcome, as this year may break a string of increasingly non-white electorates. In 2008, whites made up a record-low 74 percent of all voters; in the latest *Post*-ABC poll, they made up a similar 75 percent of likely 2012 voters.

In 2004, John Kerry lost white voters to George W. Bush by a similarly wide margin, 58 to 41 percent — and he also lost the election.

Compared with four years ago, white voter support for Obama is now lower among white men and white independents. (See the latest *Post*-ABC tracking poll on The Fix at 5 p.m. every day through Nov. 5.)

The clearest loss for the president is among white men. In 2008, Obama lost white men by 16 points, according to the exit poll. This year, Obama trails Romney double that margin — 33 points — larger than any deficit for a Democratic candidate since Ronald Reagan's 1984 landslide win over Walter Mondale.

### Vote for president, by race/ethnicity



National exit polls

After splitting their votes 47 percent for Obama and 49 percent for McCain in 2008, whites who identify as political independents now favor Romney over Obama, 59 to 38 percent. Nearly half of all of those who supported Obama in 2008 but Romney in 2012 are white independents. (Overall, whites make up more than 90 percent of "switchers.")

A key element of Romney's advantage among all whites is that by 55 to 39 percent, more white voters say he, not Obama understands the economic problems people in this country are having. Among whites without college degrees, Romney is up 58 to 35 percent on this score, expanding what was a narrow gap just a few weeks ago. This advantage comes even as 48 percent of white voters say Romney, as president, would do more to favor the wealthy; 37 percent say he would do more to for the middle class.

Most non-college and college-educated whites alike see Obama as doing more to favor those in the middle, not the wealthy.

[20121025-07](#) 17:51 Pam Re: "2012 Voters: The Deepest Racial Split Since '88" (reply to MarthaH, above)

There's a great editorial in this week's *New Yorker* magazine that lays out all of Obama's accomplishments and the urgent necessity for him to win re-election. There's also a good piece on how Romney's health policy would impact the nation. We're pretty near the edge here, and the other side is focused and hungry. I worry the election will be stolen, like it was with Bush.

If you really think the current administration has been bad for business... please look at this.

It's from well-respected investment advisors, The Motley Fool.

I was VERY surprised by what I saw. I bet you will be, too.

"The Best Presidents for the Economy" by Morgan House, The Motley Fool

Oct. 25, 2012, (<http://www.fool.com/investing/general/2012/10/24/the-best-presidents-for-the-economy.aspx>)

We're two weeks away from the presidential election. You will inevitably hear over the coming days that this will be one of the most important elections of our lifetimes. I'm not sure that's the case. One of my favorite election quotes comes from bank lobbyist Andrew Lowenthal: "Every election I've ever been involved with has been 'the most important election in history.' At some point, it's not. It's just the path of history."

In general, presidents get too much credit for the economy when things are good, and too much blame when things are poor. We tend to imagine every blip in the stock market and every unemployment report as a direct reflection of a president's policies -- particularly during election years. In reality, Congress and the Federal Reserve probably have just as much, if not more, sway over the economy than any president. And one president's policies can spill over into the next administration, making it difficult to sort out who is liable for what. We have a hard enough time accurately measuring what the economy is doing, let alone assigning responsibility for its moves.

Still, everyone should know a little economic history. And the cleanest way to get a feel for how the economy has done under past presidents is to just lay the numbers bare.

Here are five economic variables going back to 1900, covering every president from Teddy Roosevelt to Barack Obama.

## 1. Stock market performance

This is the inflation-adjusted, dividend-adjusted, performance of the S&P 500:

<b>President</b>	<b>Average annual real total stock market return</b>
Coolidge	29.1%
Ford	16.7%
Harding	16.1%
Obama	15.2%
Clinton	14.2%
Eisenhower	13.9%
Reagan	10.7%
G.H.W Bush	9.4%
F. D. Roosevelt	8.8%
Truman	8.2%
Kennedy	7.4%
Johnson	6.7%
T. Roosevelt	4.0%
Carter	2.1%
Taft	1.9%
Wilson	-4.5%
G.W. Bush	-5.5%
Nixon	-7.6%
Hoover	-19.2%

Sources: Robert Shiller, author's calculations.

## 2. Corporate profits

President	Average annual real corporate profit growth
Obama	77.9%
Harding	17.7%
Clinton	9.2%
Coolidge	8.8%
Kennedy	7.3%
Truman	6.6%
Johnson	4.4%
Roosevelt	4.2%
Reagan	2.3%
Eisenhower	2.1%
Nixon	1.9%
T. Roosevelt	1.1%
Taft	0.1%
Carter	0.0%
Ford	-2.3%
Wilson	-7.6%
G.H.W Bush	-9.5%
G. W. Bush	-17.4%
Hoover	-21.3%

Source: Robert Shiller, author's calculations.

A word here: Corporate profits were incredibly depressed from the financial crisis in January 2009, when President Obama entered office. That low starting point makes growth through today look massive. If, instead of January 2009, you use January 2008 profit levels as a starting base, average annual corporate profit growth under President Obama is 6.8%.

### 3. Real GDP per capita

This measures growth of the entire economy adjusted for the size of the population:

President	Average annual real GDP growth per capita
F. D. Roosevelt	8.0%
Harding	6.3%
Johnson	4.3%
Ford	2.8%
Reagan	2.6%
Kennedy	2.5%
Clinton	2.5%
Coolidge	2.0%
Carter	1.6%
Nixon	1.5%
Obama	1.4%
Taft	1.4%
Eisenhower	0.9%
G.H.W Bush	0.7%
G. W. Bush	0.5%
Truman	0.3%
Wilson	0.0%
T. Roosevelt	-0.4%
Hoover	-8.2%

Source: Bureau of Economic Analysis, author's calculations.

Another note here: World War II spending was near a peak when President Roosevelt passed away in 1945, boosting the economy and annual growth. Real GDP fell 12% between 1945 and 1947 as wartime spending tapered off.

#### 4. Inflation

<b>President</b>	<b>Average annual change in Consumer Price Index</b>
Carter	10.1%
Wilson	8.1%
Ford	6.2%
Nixon	6.2%
Truman	5.2%
Reagan	4.1%
G.H.W Bush	4.1%
Roosevelt	2.9%
Johnson	2.8%
Clinton	2.6%
G. W. Bush	2.3%
Obama	2.2%
T. Roosevelt	2.0%
Taft	1.5%
Eisenhower	1.5%
Kennedy	1.1%
Coolidge	-0.2%
Harding	-2.3%
Hoover	-7.1%

Source: Robert Shiller, author's calculations.

## 5. Unemployment rate

This is the change in the unemployment rate during presidential terms (or through September for President Obama), measured in percentage points. Unemployment is measured by a yearly average before 1955; after, it is measured on a monthly basis.

President	Change in unemployment rate during presidency
Roosevelt	-32.8%
Harding	-12.3%
Clinton	-2.9%
Johnson	-2.1%
Reagan	-2.0%
Taft	-1.6%
Kennedy	-1.2%
Carter	-0.1%
Obama	0.0%
Coolidge	+0.1%
Truman	+0.7%
Ford	+1.6%
G.H.W Bush	+2.1%
Nixon	+2.1%
Eisenhower	+3.4%
G.W. Bush	+3.6%
T. Roosevelt	+9.2%
Wilson	+10.3%
Hoover	+30.6%

Source: Bureau of Economic Analysis, author's calculations.

[20121025-09](#) 19:01 Ben Photo: Today's Seafood Lunch at Apple

Another delightful and well-balanced meal. In fact, more well-balanced than I'd expected, by far.

I mentioned that Salt and Pepper Shrimp (aka "Shrimp with Special Salt") is a particular favorite. It's a dish I learned fairly recently; I first had it at Austin's former Sea Dragon when I wanted to try something new. I loved it, and when ordering it at other Chinese restaurants, have found it to be a highly varied dish. In common, though, Chinese restaurant variants have all served the dish with the shrimp shell-on, lightly battered or simply dredged in rice flour with salt and black pepper. The dish has always had thinly sliced jalapeno, serrano, or Asian chili peppers, or fiery dried Szechuan peppers, with scallions finely minced and stir-fried in batter or something with a ton of garlic, with white rice but virtually no useful vegetables.

This dish was utterly different, very tasty. Only the tails were on the unbattered, lightly dredged shrimp, and it wasn't saturated with garlic. Large thin slices of carrot and scallion abounded, and the light sauce was redolent of

sesame, lightly sweetened with (!) honey. Broccolini (aka "Chinese Broccoli") enhanced the balance, and is the only reason a knife and fork appear in this photo. (I pre-cut the broccolini to enhance my reading pleasure...)





<http://williambezek.blogspot.com/2012/09/shape-shifter.html>



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

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## FRIENDS OF THE MIDDLE NEWSLETTER #257 — OCT. 29, 2012

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

**INDEX: Click here.**

### **God's Own Paradox**

(posted by Steven W. Baker / SteveB, Oct. 29, 2012)

We've been talking about the issues of faith and fate. How timely that Mr. Mourdock's recent "gaffe" provides such a clear example of the logical problems of determinism. And maybe someone can tell me how all these freedom-loving Republicans became such fans of Cotton Mather and Jonathan Edwards? Oh, that's right, American predestination was huge in the 17th Century (along with the Salem Witch Trials). These are the "good old days" conservatives want to return the country to! John Calvin, back there in the 16th Century, must be very happy indeed...



"Job's Evil Dreams" by William Blake (National Gallery of Art)

"You can continue to believe in a God who knows in advance the number of our days; you can sharply limit your conception of God's power, by positing a deity who does not know in advance what we will do, or who cannot control what we will do; or you can scrap the whole idea of divinity. The problem with the first position is that most believers, as Richard Mourdock did not do, run away from the dread implications of their own beliefs; and the problem with the second position is that it is not clear why such a limited deity would be worth worshipping. So cut Richard Mourdock some slack. He's more honest than most of his evangelical peers; and his naïve honesty, at least, helpfully illuminates a horrid abyss." (from article, below)

"Murdock's Dilemma" by James Wood, *The New Yorker*

October 26, 2012, (<http://www.newyorker.com/online/blogs/books/2012/10/murdocks-dilemma.html#ixzz2AVE2moUD>)

"There is no good mother who, having given her daughters permission to go to a dance, would not revoke that permission if she were assured that they would succumb to temptations and lose their virginity there."  
—Pierre Bayle, *Historical and Critical Dictionary*, 1697.

The latest Republican spin seems to be that when Richard Mourdock, the senatorial candidate for Indiana, said that if a child is conceived by an act of rape, "it is something that God intended to happen," he was bumbling his way toward a less controversial proposition—that "life is precious, regardless of the circumstances," as Rob Jesmer, the executive director of the Republican National Senatorial Committee, told the *New York Times*. Jesmer added that Mourdock "didn't say it in a particularly articulate way." Mourdock may be both idiotic and vile, but I don't think he was especially inarticulate, and I don't think he was merely alleging that life is cherishable, whatever the conditions of its conception. He was more pointed: he said that life is a "gift from God," and that even "if life begins in that horrible situation of rape, that it is something that God intended to happen." Obviously, it all depends on the meaning of "it." For an air-brusher like Rob Jesmer, "it" means life, and not rape. But the force of Mourdock's claim, the shock of its haplessly radical transparency, lies in the fact that by "it" he clearly meant both the rape and the life that might come from it. Since God intends life to happen, God also intends all the various ways, good and horrible, in which life comes about. That is the commonsensical reading of Mourdock's words.

This may be unpalatable, and for many non-believers it is a profound reason not to believe in the traditional God of monotheism, but there is nothing theologically peculiar about Mourdock's position. (He is an evangelical Christian.) First of all, he was doing nothing more than offering the familiar weak defense of God in relation to evil and pain, the silver-lining defense: out of the unavoidable abundance of great suffering and hardship that exists in the world, God produces redemptive teaching. New life is born, or we learn something important about ourselves, or we come anew to God or Christ, etc., etc. As Bart Ehrman pointed out in his book *God's Problem*, the Bible is full of such stories. When Joseph confronts his murderous brothers in Egypt, he lectures them about how (in Ehrman's words) "even though you intended to do harm to me, God intended it for good, in order to preserve a numerous people, as he is doing today." The Job story ends in the suffering faithful man restored to happiness and prosperity, as reward for his hardship. And, of course, the story of Jesus's sacrifice and resurrection is the ultimate version of the redemption idea: God suffers with us on the cross, dies, and is born to new life in heaven, a place where God wipes away all tears from our faces, and where there is no more death or sorrow. In her essay on affliction, the philosopher Simone Weil essentially argued that suffering is good for us; that we are like apprentices who must learn on the job, by making painful mistakes.

A second, stronger claim was lying within Mourdock's first claim: not just that good may emerge from bad things, but that, since God intends the good to emerge, he must also intend the bad things. This is a hard idea, and people naturally flee from it, but its logic is implicit in the Biblical stories that Ehrman mentions. God knew in advance everything that was going to happen to Job—indeed, it was a little game he hatched with Satan. If the great good of the resurrection was a result of the crucifixion, then it makes no sense to separate the one from the other: both events were divinely intended, divinely anticipated. I give the reprehensible Mourdock some credit, at least, for spelling out the implacable and pitiless logic of divine foreknowledge. Most believers refuse to face the implications of their own beliefs in this regard, except when it suits them: that is, when they think they have been "saved" by

God from some terrible calamity. Climbing out of the wreckage of the bus accident or the gas explosion or the terrorist bomb, the relieved survivor easily praises God for "the miracle" of his survival, and sometimes even adds that "God must be looking out for me," apparently unaware that the same God must therefore have approved the demise of the person who didn't make it out. If God is the author of "miracles," he is also the author of death. (And it might be added that Mitt Romney, and all those who argue that life begins at conception but who allow an abortion exception in the case of rape and incest, are also refusing to face the implications of their hesitations: for if abortion is murder but abortion is permissible in certain circumstances, then either it must follow that murderous abortion is permissible when an adult life is more important than a fetus'; or it must follow that a fetus conceived by rape or incest is simply not a human life. Again, Mourdock is coherent where Romney and others are incoherent.)

This is an ancient dilemma. The gods of Genesis and an early Mesopotamian poem like the "Atrahasis" are violent, punitive creators, and these texts seem unashamed by the idea of a deity that produces both good and evil. **Why would we be shocked by a God who intends a rape, but not shocked by a God who floods the world, kills most of the life on it, and starts all over again? Or who orders a man to kill his son?** In the Book of Isaiah, the Lord announces: **"I form the light, and create darkness: I make peace, and create evil. I the Lord do all these things."** When Abraham pleads with God to spare the inhabitants of Sodom, it is Abraham who seems to be the ethicist, and God who seems to be the murderous hothead in need of Abraham's wise counsel. And this is the same God who knowingly hardens Pharaoh's heart whenever Moses asks him to "let my people go," even though the cost of this divine control is a series of devastating plagues for the Egyptians, culminating in the slaughter of every first-born. Note the Mourdockian emphasis: it is not Pharaoh who hardens his heart against the Israelites; it is God who does so. It's all part of the plan of Exodus: life comes out of death, good comes out of evil.

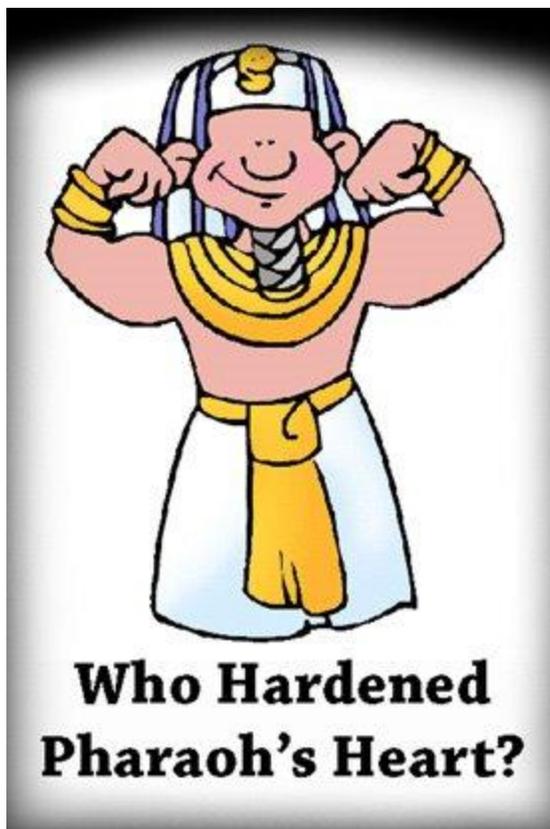
Sure enough, this kind of thing has made theologians and annotators very anxious: we have two thousand years of awkward and justifying commentary, in both the Judaic and Christian traditions. The Protestant and Catholic churches struggled for centuries with the implications of God's foreknowledge of sin and suffering. You can try to wriggle out of these implications by arguing that we humans must have freedom to do good and evil or we would just be automata, remotely controlled by God. But this returns us to Mourdock's dilemma. Because if God knows in advance what we will do, he knows that we will misuse our freedom, as he surely knew that Adam and Eve would. As Pierre Bayle, the seventeenth-century skeptic, sardonically puts it in his *Historical and Critical Dictionary*, divine foreknowledge of this kind is a bit like a mother who lets her daughter go to a ball, knowing in advance that she will be violated. What mother would do that? Why would God, Bayle says, bestow a gift that he knows in advance will be abused? And abused in such a way that—as in the case of Adam and Eve—it will bring about our eternal damnation?

In his book, *What I Believe*, the English philosopher Anthony Kenny, who was ordained a priest in 1955, but who left the priesthood and his Catholic faith in the nineteen-sixties, says that it was precisely the issue of divine omniscience that determined the course of his subsequent unbelief. It is not possible, he argues, to "reconcile the freedom of the will with the attributes that Christians traditionally ascribe to God." He quotes the following prayer of confession, from the Calvinist Belgic Confession: "We believe that the same good God, after He had created all things, did not forsake them or give them up to fortune or chance, but that He rules and governs them according to His holy will, so that nothing happens in this world without His appointment; nevertheless God is neither the Author of nor can be charged with the sins that are committed." Notice again the theological wriggle: God ordains all things, but can't be charged with the sins that are committed. He knew the Holocaust would happen, but he didn't intend it to happen. Kenny comments that though this is a Protestant statement of belief, "orthodox Catholics would agree with every word of it." Kenny goes on to appraise the dilemma with admirable clarity:

I have argued in several places that there cannot be any such thing as the God so described. If determinism is false, and free actions are contingent [i.e. accidental and truly free], then there can be no infallible knowledge of future free actions, since as long as they are future there is no necessity about their happening, and any prediction of them must have an element of conjecture. On the other hand, if determinism is true, then God is indeed the author of sin, because if an agent knowingly sets in motion a deterministic process with a certain upshot, then the agent is responsible for that upshot.

Philosophers might quibble with Kenny's lucid either/or. But religiously speaking, there are only three possible responses: you can continue to believe in a God who knows in advance the number of our days; you can sharply limit your conception of God's power, by positing a deity who does not know in advance what we will do, or who

cannot control what we will do; or you can scrap the whole idea of divinity. The problem with the first position is that most believers, as Richard Mourdock did not do, run away from the dread implications of their own beliefs; and the problem with the second position is that it is not clear why such a limited deity would be worth worshipping. So cut Richard Mourdock some slack. He's more honest than most of his evangelical peers; and his naïve honesty, at least, helpfully illuminates a horrid abyss.



"Can an omnipotent God create a rock so heavy he is unable to move it? Say "no," and He must not be omnipotent. Say "yes," and it's the same result." —D.A. Carson

No surprise...

"The Swift Boaters Are Back for 2012" by Dan Eggen, *The Washington Post*

Oct. 26, 2012, ([http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/election-2012/post/the-swift-boaters-are-back-for-2012/2012/10/26/18180cc0-1f37-11e2-ba31-3083ca97c314\\_blog.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/election-2012/post/the-swift-boaters-are-back-for-2012/2012/10/26/18180cc0-1f37-11e2-ba31-3083ca97c314_blog.html))

(The Swift Boat crew is back for another election.)

Many of the top donors to a group that funded controversial attacks on the military career of Sen. John Kerry (D-Mass.) in the 2004 presidential race are now heavily funding a super PAC targeting President Obama, new records show.

American Crossroads, a super PAC backed by former George W. Bush adviser Karl Rove, received \$6 million in October from the key backers of the earlier effort against Kerry, according to disclosures filed late Thursday. Dallas billionaire Harold Simmons gave \$4 million; Houston homebuilder Bob J. Perry gave \$1 million; and Dallas financier T. Boone Pickens chipped in another \$1 million.

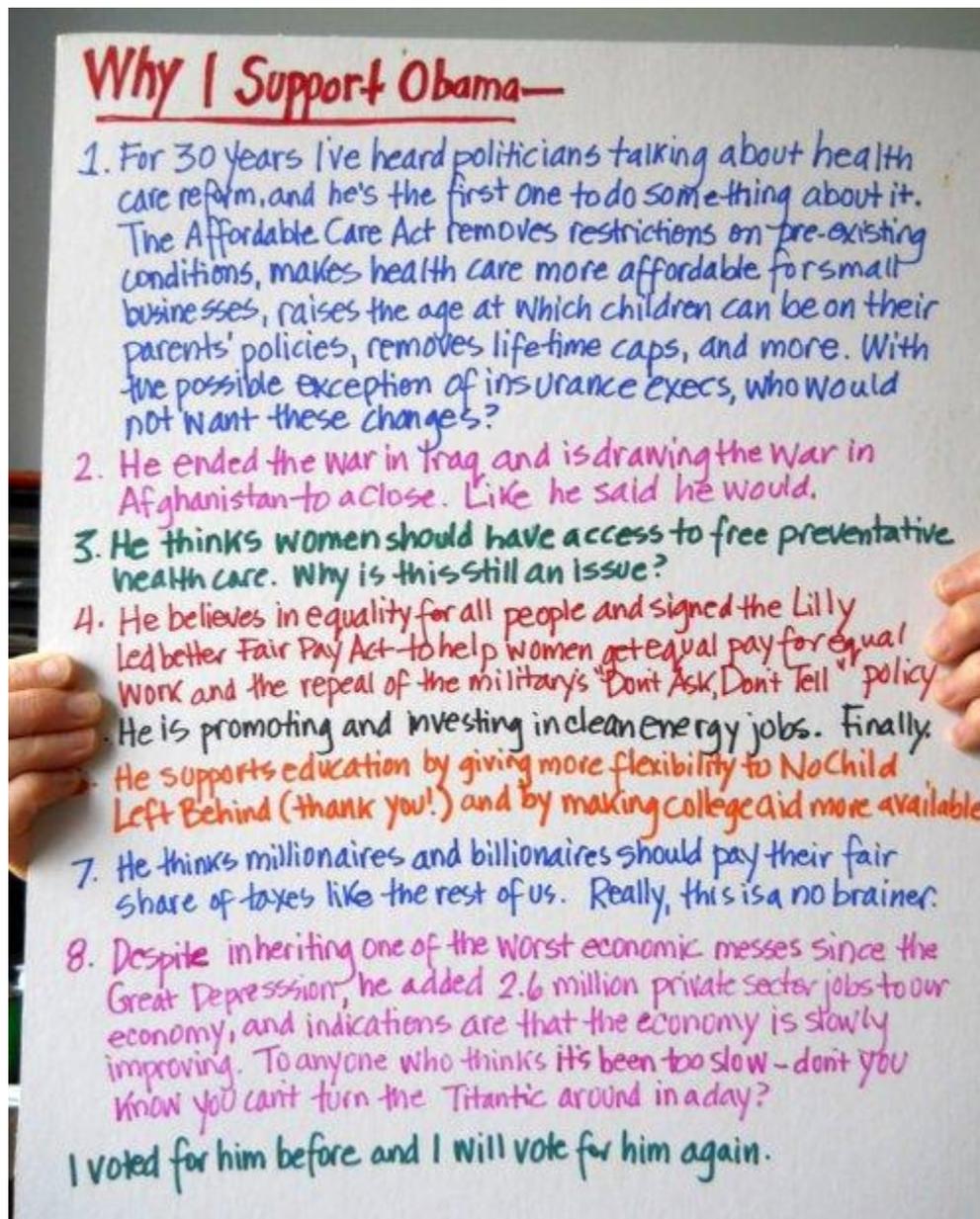
As first noted by the Huffington Post, the trio were the top three financial backers of Swift Boat Veterans for Truth, which accused Kerry of lying about his Vietnam War record and had a devastating impact on the Democrat's campaign. The Post reported in 2010 that Swift Boat alumni were prominent among American Crossroads' earliest donors, a trend that has continued in 2012.

Pickens had not previously given to the Rove group, but Simmons and Perry are among this year's biggest conservative donors, taking advantage of loosened campaign regulations that make it easier to spend unlimited funds on elections. Simmons has contributed about \$23 million to GOP groups — nearly all of it to Crossroads — while Perry has given \$7.5 million to Crossroads and about \$14 million to others.

Simmons told the Wall Street Journal in a rare interview earlier this year that he would spend up to \$36 million to defeat Obama, whom he called "that socialist" and the "most dangerous American alive ... because he would eliminate free enterprise in this country."

The situation is not without irony: Rove and other Republicans hope to use the power of outside money to their advantage as the Swift Boat organization did, but this time on behalf of a challenger. Democrats, meanwhile, are hoping Obama will be returned to office in a close, base-driven election as Bush was eight years ago, overcoming a tide of attacks from independent groups.

Pretty good summary. Of course, it won't convince the racists, but then logic never will.



I agree, Art, excellent summary!

No need to comment here, beyond that the salad was very fresh stuff, including those gorgeous watermelon radishes, and roasted turnips, parsnips, and pears, with "all the seeds, nuts and berries". No chicken in it this time: decided to veg it. The snickerdoodle was the crispest of the lot, quite fine. iPhone 1.0 photo today:



20121027-01 06:23 SteveB Fw: Last Warning (2012)

from "Windows Live":

IMMEDIATE ATTENTION REQUIRED

Dear Customer,

Windows Live Hotmail® accounts has been growing really fast.

We are having too many congested email due to the anonymous registration of Hotmail, Msn, and Live Accounts on our database system. Please reconfirm your email account and information to know if your account is still active and will also be recorded on our new database system. You will receive a message code from us to your mobile phone indicating that your account is active.

We need you to fill in the information below within 48 hours or you will lose your account permanently:

- Name
- Username
- Password
- Date of birth
- Country or Territory
- Security Question
- Security Answer

Here are some ways to help you manage your account after you reconfirm your account:

1. Create an archive - Set up a folder on your PC's hard drive where you can save large attachments. Then just delete them from your inbox. You'll still have them and your inbox will be that much smaller.

2. Make your filters work for you- Did you know you can set up your Hotmail account to immediately delete junk e-mail? Go to Options, and click Filters and reporting. Under the "Delete junk e-mail" section, select Immediately to delete junk e-mail right away. Once you're finished, click Save and you're done.

3. Delete a bunch of mail at once- Go to your Junk and Deleted folders, and clear them out by clicking the "Empty" button in the action bar.

If you have more questions, please read our help topic on Hotmail storage.

Sincerely, The Windows Live Hotmail Team

Microsoft respects your privacy. To learn more, please read our online Privacy Statement.

Microsoft Corporation, One Microsoft Way, Redmond, WA 98052-6399, USA © 2008 Microsoft Corporation.

**20121028-03** 10:48 SteveB Fw: GainD ea lsFor c e"

This email was so well-worded that I almost followed the links, so Rob Donaldson (?) could either send me a bunch of money or infect my computer with a spelling/coherency virus. This proves good grammar and spelling are the first order of business if you want to be read and to persuade your reader! Note: I **wouldn't** follow the links if I were you.

from Rob Donaldson ([cq1987\\_59@hotmail.com](mailto:cq1987_59@hotmail.com)):

<http://rk290hrg9cg17m.drugmasddert1XYaNi4jBEWw.com> <<http://EXZjjaYS.rp.drugmasddert.com>>  
superconductivity wha you see brian of

the ploseen tehy had been traveling

yes i lekood she soehwd meppshe

**20121027-02** 07:36 MarthaH "AP Poll: Majority Harbor Prejudice Against Blacks"

What we already knew...

AP Poll: Majority Harbor Prejudice Against Blacks" by Jennifer Agiesta and Sonya Ross, AP

Oct. 27, 2012, (<http://news.yahoo.com/ap-poll-majority-harbor-prejudice-against-blacks-073551680--election.html>)

(WASHINGTON) Racial attitudes have not improved in the four years since the United States elected its first black president, an Associated Press poll finds, as a slight majority of Americans now express prejudice toward blacks whether they recognize those feelings or not.

Those views could cost President Barack Obama votes as he tries for re-election, the survey found, though the effects are mitigated by some people's more favorable views of blacks.

Racial prejudice has increased slightly since 2008 whether those feelings were measured using questions that explicitly asked respondents about racist attitudes, or through an experimental test that measured implicit views toward race without asking questions about that topic directly.

In all, 51 percent of Americans now express explicit anti-black attitudes, compared with 48 percent in a similar 2008 survey. When measured by an implicit racial attitudes test, the number of Americans with anti-black sentiments jumped to 56 percent, up from 49 percent during the last presidential election. In both tests, the share of Americans expressing pro-black attitudes fell.

"As much as we'd hope the impact of race would decline over time ... it appears the impact of anti-black sentiment on voting is about the same as it was four years ago," said Jon Krosnick, a Stanford University professor who worked with AP to develop the survey.

Most Americans expressed anti-Hispanic sentiments, too. In an AP survey done in 2011, 52 percent of non-Hispanic whites expressed anti-Hispanic attitudes. That figure rose to 57 percent in the implicit test. The survey on Hispanics had no past data for comparison.

The AP surveys were conducted with researchers from Stanford University, the University of Michigan and NORC at the University of Chicago.

Experts on race said they were not surprised by the findings.

"We have this false idea that there is uniformity in progress and that things change in one big step. That is not the way history has worked," said Jelani Cobb, professor of history and director of the Institute for African-American Studies at the University of Connecticut. "When we've seen progress, we've also seen backlash."

Obama has tread cautiously on the subject of race, but many African-Americans have talked openly about perceived antagonism toward them since Obama took office. As evidence, they point to events involving police brutality or cite bumper stickers, cartoons and protest posters that mock the president as a lion or a monkey, or lynch him in effigy.

"Part of it is growing polarization within American society," said Fredrick Harris, director of the Institute for Research in African-American Studies at Columbia University. "The last Democrat in the White House said we had to have a national discussion about race. There's been total silence around issues of race with this president. But, as you see, whether there is silence, or an elevation of the discussion of race, you still have polarization. It will take more generations, I suspect, before we eliminate these deep feelings."

Overall, the survey found that by virtue of racial prejudice, Obama could lose 5 percentage points off his share of the popular vote in his Nov. 6 contest against Republican challenger Mitt Romney. But Obama also stands to benefit from a 3 percentage point gain due to pro-black sentiment, researchers said. Overall, that means an estimated net loss of 2 percentage points due to anti-black attitudes.

The poll finds that racial prejudice is not limited to one group of partisans. Although Republicans were more likely than Democrats to express racial prejudice in the questions measuring explicit racism (79 percent among Republicans compared with 32 percent among Democrats), the implicit test found little difference between the two parties. That test showed a majority of both Democrats and Republicans held anti-black feelings (55 percent of Democrats and 64 percent of Republicans), as did about half of political independents (49 percent).

Obama faced a similar situation in 2008, the survey then found.

The AP developed the surveys to measure sensitive racial views in several ways and repeated those studies several times between 2008 and 2012.

The explicit racism measures asked respondents whether they agreed or disagreed with a series of statements about black and Hispanic people. In addition, the surveys asked how well respondents thought certain words, such as "friendly," "hardworking," "violent" and "lazy," described blacks, whites and Hispanics.

The same respondents were also administered a survey designed to measure implicit racism, in which a photo of a black, Hispanic or white male flashed on the screen before a neutral image of a Chinese character. The respondents were then asked to rate their feelings toward the Chinese character. Previous research has shown that people

transfer their feelings about the photo onto the character, allowing researchers to measure racist feelings even if a respondent does not acknowledge them.

Results from those questions were analyzed with poll takers' ages, partisan beliefs, views on Obama and Romney and other factors, which allowed researchers to predict the likelihood that people would vote for either Obama or Romney. Those models were then used to estimate the net impact of each factor on the candidates' support.

All the surveys were conducted online. Other research has shown that poll takers are more likely to share unpopular attitudes when they are filling out a survey using a computer rather than speaking with an interviewer. Respondents were randomly selected from a nationally representative panel maintained by GfK Custom Research.

Overall results from each survey have a margin of sampling error of approximately plus or minus 4 percentage points. The most recent poll, measuring anti-black views, was conducted Aug. 30 to Sept. 11.

Andra Gillespie, an Emory University political scientist who studies race-neutrality among black politicians, contrasted the situation to that faced by the first black mayors elected in major U.S. cities, the closest parallel to Obama's first-black situation. Those mayors, she said, typically won about 20 percent of the white vote in their first races, but when seeking reelection they enjoyed greater white support presumably because "the whites who stayed in the cities ... became more comfortable with a black executive."

"President Obama's election clearly didn't change those who appear to be sort of hard-wired folks with racial resentment," she said.

Negative racial attitudes can manifest in policy, noted Alan Jenkins, an assistant solicitor general during the Clinton administration and now executive director of the Opportunity Agenda think tank.

"That has very real circumstances in the way people are treated by police, the way kids are treated by teachers, the way home seekers are treated by landlords and real estate agents," Jenkins said.

Hakeem Jeffries, a New York state assemblyman and candidate for a congressional seat being vacated by a fellow black Democrat, called it troubling that more progress on racial attitudes had not been made. Jeffries has fought a New York City police program of "stop and frisk" that has affected mostly blacks and Latinos but which supporters contend is not racially focused.

"I do remain cautiously optimistic that the future of America bends toward the side of increased racial tolerance," Jeffries said. "We've come a long way, but clearly these results demonstrate there's a long way to go."

(AP News Survey Specialist Dennis Junius contributed to this report.)

Poll results: <http://surveys.ap.org>.

Academic analysis: <http://tinyurl.com/8pzbebm>.

20121027-03

10:56

SandtI

Re: "AP Poll: Majority Harbor Prejudice Against Blacks" (reply to MarthaH, above)

When the privileged are threatened with the loss of privilege, too often they go on the offense and blame their loss on those that have long had no privilege. Their definition of sharing is for others to share with them.

Help us on the Path to live in peace in a diverse society and care for one another so that we can resolve the "have and have not" world.

Build the Dream.

"Holding onto anger is like grasping a hot coal with the intention of throwing it at someone else—you're the one who gets burned." —Buddha

<a href="#">20121027-04</a>	11:22	Pam	Re: "AP Poll: Majority Harbor Prejudice Against Blacks" (reply to MarthaH, above)
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I'd like to know what those questions were that were included in the survey on race. This says the questions were indirect, apparently about other issues. I'm curious.

[Pam, see the links at the end of the article above. And, often, if you follow the link to the online article, you will often find additional materials and links such as these. —SteveB]

<a href="#">20121027-05</a>	15:58	Art	Re: "AP Poll: Majority Harbor Prejudice Against Blacks" (reply to all, above)
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Ever since the formation of the Tea Party tripe, this political race has been about race. Southern whites and many whites in Middle America simply cannot accept that there is a man with black skin in the White House who is smarter and far more capable than they are. It is as simple as that.

<a href="#">20121027-06</a>	16:28	Art	Video: "Still Voting For 'Mitt Romney'?"
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Left-Right???? Worth a watch. How can any thinking person support this?

Video: "Still Voting For 'Mitt Romney'?" by NewSimpleadams,  
([https://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player\\_embedded&v=EQwrB1vu74c](https://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=EQwrB1vu74c))

This video will show you just how unsure 'Mitt Romney' is about almost everything in the world, See for yourself.

We the people can still fight to get this country back on track, and the first step we have to take is to not let 'Mitt Romney' become President of the United States. As Ron Paul once said, "I am just absolutely convinced that the best formula for giving us peace and preserving the American way of life is freedom, limited government, and minding our own business overseas." Which is exactly the opposite of what Mitt Romney stands for.

(The clips featured in this video were cut out from various videos on YouTube.)

<a href="#">20121027-07</a>	17:13	Art	"Republicans Filibuster Everything, Romney Blames Obama for Not Working with Congress"
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"Republicans Filibuster Everything, Romney Blames Obama for Not Working with Congress" by Bob Cesca, [Huffington Post/The Daily Banter](#)

Oct. 25, 2012, ([http://www.huffingtonpost.com/bob-cesca/republicans-filibuster-ev\\_b\\_2018663.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/bob-cesca/republicans-filibuster-ev_b_2018663.html))

The Romney campaign released a shockingly Orwellian commercial over the weekend, which perpetuates something Romney himself has been saying for months now. Honestly, there's a book-length analysis to be written here, but I'll keep it as brief as possible given the depth and breadth of what the Republicans have been able to accomplish on this front.

The new ad blames President Obama for not reaching out and working with congressional Republicans to get things done. Yes, really. It also ballyhoos Mitt Romney's claim that he was able to work with a Massachusetts legislature that was 85 percent Democratic.

I don't know whether to be brutally outraged about this or to congratulate the Republicans on an outstanding execution of political obstruction and subsequent projection. For now, let's go with brutally outraged.

It's important to review exactly what's led us to this point. From the very beginning, congressional Republicans fell into lockstep with Rush Limbaugh and the collective wish for the Obama presidency to fail. Limbaugh set the table several days before the inauguration by telling his audience:

So I'm thinking of replying to the guy, "Okay, I'll send you a response, but I don't need 400 words, I need four: I hope he fails." (interruption) What are you laughing at? See, here's the point. Everybody thinks it's outrageous to say. Look, even my staff, "Oh, you can't do that." Why not? Why is it any different, what's new, what is unfair about my saying I hope liberalism fails? Liberalism is our problem. Liberalism is what's gotten us dangerously close to the precipice here. Why do I want more of it? I don't care what the Drive-By story is. I would be honored if the Drive-By Media headlined me all day long: "Limbaugh: I Hope Obama Fails." Somebody's gotta say it.

The prevailing worry here was that America faced a worsening crisis, with a failing economy and a financial meltdown, and if liberal policies succeeded in resolving the crisis, liberalism would become further entrenched as the best means of stewarding the economy. Subsequently, if the president's center-left policies succeeded, he'd be re-elected and the Republicans would have to wait until 2016 for another stab at the White House.

The only way to prevent this eventuality was to stonewall the president's legislative agenda. All of it. Such an objective is nearly unprecedented. Usually an opposition party is driven to occasionally work with the majority party on the off-chance the majority party's legislation succeeds. This way, the opposition party can claim partial credit for the achievement. Not this time. Instead, the Republicans banked on their mighty bumper-sticker marketeering machine whereby, irrespective of Democratic successes, the Republicans would simply tell voters that those successes were actually failures and that it was President Obama who stubbornly refused to reach across the aisle. Up is down, white is black. Opposite Day politics. With the execution of this "everything has failed" strategy, they were freed up to vote against everything that came down the pike.

And so the Republicans proceeded to rack up the highest number of filibusters in American history. During the president's first two years in office, the 111th Congress, there were 137 cloture motions filed to end Republican filibusters. During the president's second two years, the 112th Congress, there were 109 motions filed to end Republican filibusters and we still have a few more months to go. 246 total cloture motions. Compare this to George W. Bush's first term when there were a total of 133 cloture motions filed. Not even a handful of "sensible" Republicans had the guts to break ranks and vote with the Democrats. Meanwhile, on the House side, the Republican majority has voted in near-lockstep against almost everything.

What bills have the Republicans filibustered? To name a few:

- H.R. 12 -- Paycheck Fairness Act
- H.R. 448 -- Elder Abuse Victims Act
- H.R. 466 -- Wounded Veteran Job Security Act
- H.R. 515 -- Radioactive Import Deterrence Act
- H.R. 549 -- National Bombing Prevention Act
- H.R. 577 -- Vision Care for Kids Act
- H.R. 626 -- Federal Employees Paid Parental Leave Act
- H.R. 1029 -- Alien Smuggling and Terrorism Prevention Act
- H.R. 1168 -- Veterans Retraining Act
- H.R. 1171 -- Homeless Veterans Reintegration Program Reauthorization
- H.R. 1293 -- Disabled Veterans Home Improvement and Structural Alteration Grant Increase Act
- H.R. 1429 -- Stop AIDS in Prison Act

- H.R.5281 -- DREAM Act
- S.3985 -- Emergency Senior Citizens Relief Act
- S.3816 -- Creating American Jobs and Ending Offshoring Act
- S.3369 -- A bill to provide for additional disclosure requirements for corporations, labor organizations, Super PACs and other entities
- S.2237 -- Small Business Jobs and Tax Relief Act
- S.2343 -- Stop the Student Loan Interest Rate Hike Act
- S.1660 -- American Jobs Act of 2011
- S.3457 -- Veterans Jobs Corps Act

What else?

Here's an astonishing one. The Republicans filibustered the James Zadroga 9/11 Health and Compensation Act -- basically, healthcare for 9/11 heroes. Every Republican senator voted to filibuster this bill. I suppose the Republicans are only interested in 9/11 heroes when they're used as political props.

On the House side, every single Republican, including Paul Ryan, voted against the Statutory Pay-As-You-Go Act, which forces Congress to pay for new legislation through either budget cuts or revenue increases.

You'd think that by helping to pass these bills, Republicans could boast a solid record on fiscal responsibility, job creation, veterans affairs, anti-terrorism, senior citizens and, hell, 9/11 workers. Instead, they blocked all of it. Jobs for military veterans, tax cuts for small businesses -- you name it. Why? So President Obama and the Democrats could be accused of failure.

And it's working.

Republican Senate leader Mitch McConnell famously told the *National Journal*, "The single most important thing we want to achieve is for President Obama to be a one-term president." Not economic growth, jobs, healthcare or military strength. A failed Obama presidency was the primary -- and I would argue *the only* goal of the last two Republican congresses.

The Romney campaign is busily playing the endgame on this strategy by projecting Republican obstructionism onto the president and accusing him of refusing to work with Congress, even though the president and the Democrats have dished out heaping piles of legislation that Republicans could reasonably get behind. Not only that, but the president has gone out of his way to incorporate Republican ideas into his major agenda items. The individual mandate is a Republican idea devised and supported by people like Newt Gingrich, Bob Dole and Chuck Grassley. The Affordable Care Act is more or less modeled after Mitt Romney's healthcare law in Massachusetts. Many marquee aspects of the ACA ("Obamacare") were jettisoned in an effort to gain Republican votes, including the public option. Cap-and-trade is a Republican idea. The president even sided with Republicans on extending the Bush tax cuts -- a move that angered many liberals, along with the signing of the NDAA.

But if you take Romney's word for it, the president is a lazy, do-nothing chief executive who's been stonewalling the Republicans. Not the other way around. I'm not sure how he doesn't pull a muscle or dislocate a shoulder by twisting himself into a pretzel like this, but it's an amazing feat of through-the-looking-glass deception. The reason Romney was able to get anything done in Massachusetts was because the Democrats in the state legislature weren't anywhere near as obstructionist as today's congressional Republicans. And, if he's elected, the only way Romney will be able to pursue his agenda is if the Democrats are less motivated to obstruct and filibuster than the Republicans.

20121027-08 17:59 MarthaH Joke: The Gold Urinal

### The Gold Urinal

Before Obama was elected President he went to see Bill and Hillary for some campaign advice at their spacious home.

After drinking several glasses of iced tea, Obama asked Bill Clinton if he could use his personal bathroom.

When he entered Clinton's private toilet, he was astonished to see that Clinton had a solid gold urinal. Wow!

That afternoon, Obama told his wife, Michelle, about the urinal. "Just think," he said, "When I am President, I too, could have a gold urinal. But I wouldn't have something so self-indulgent!"

Later, when Michelle had lunch with Hillary, she told Hillary how impressed Obama had been at his discovery of the fact that, in his private bathroom, Bill had a gold urinal.

That evening, when Bill and Hillary were getting ready for bed, Hillary smiled and said to Bill, "I found out who peed in your saxophone."

20121027-09 18:42 Pam Re: The Golden Urinal (reply to MarthaH, above)

Cute.

20121028-01 09:57 Art "WND Columnist: Prosecute Liberals, Journalists for Treason"

The future?

Interesting article published by a guy I never heard of, but who obviously feels that, if the Republicans win, here is the direction we should take. So much for freedom of the press. What's next? Watch how you vote.

"WND Columnist: Prosecute Liberals, Journalists for Treason" by Brian Tashman, Right Wing Watch

Oct. 25, 2012, (<http://www.rightwingwatch.org/content/wnd-columnist-prosecute-liberals-journalists-treason>)

For years, conservatives have claimed that liberals seek to criminalize Christianity and conservative opinions through imaginary hate speech laws. But today, WorldNetDaily columnist Erik Rush writes that the government should prosecute liberals and members of the press... in order to defend freedom, of course. He accuses journalists of "treasonous collusion" with the Obama administration and said the Founders would have wanted journalists to be "found guilty of high crimes." "Trials for treason and the requisite sentences would apply," Rush says, "and I would have no qualms about seeing such sentences executed, no matter how severe." He claims that progressives' "seditious, anti-American" speech is "excepted from protection under the First Amendment," hoping that "the political disenfranchisement of liberals, progressives, socialists and Marxists can begin in earnest, and in the open."

Assuming that all goes well and that we are rid of Obama in January, there will be a nation to repair – but what about the causes for this necessity? Yes, many Americans are now cognizant of the fact that progressives have "progressed" America dangerously close to being a Marxist-socialist nation and that we are collectively responsible for not having checked that progress. But aside from grass-roots efforts toward electoral and political reform, there are other widespread, organized threats to America's ongoing concern as a representative republic with guaranteed personal liberties, free speech foremost among them.

Here, I am speaking of the press, the conglomeration of national broadcast, digital and print media organizations that has been incrementally packed with ideological liberals and socialists, and so has

disqualified itself as the impartial government watchdog it once was. During my lifetime, I have seen the press become an advance force for social engineering and global socialism. The degree to which they have deceived Americans and enabled the agenda of radicals in recent decades is beyond shame. As former Democratic pollster Pat Caddell said recently, the press has become an enemy of the American people. In the matter of this president, the press largely facilitated the ascension of Barack Obama. The instances wherein they have promoted, shielded and aided him are beyond enumeration.

This goes beyond such things as MSNBC's Chris Matthews and his man crush on Obama – I'm talking about treasonous collusion. One particularly scandalous incident occurred during the second presidential debate, when CNN moderator Candy Crowley made an interjection that appeared to have been as spontaneous as Ambassador Chris Stevens' murder, and which led to a solid point scored for Obama. Most recently, after Mitt Romney brought up Obama's 2009 "Apology Tour," the press did their best to support Obama's claim that this never happened, despite boundless reams of footage that exist chronicling the event.

It is improbable that the framers of the Constitution anticipated a situation in which the press was entirely given over to seditious, anti-American policies. If they had, it is likely that their modus operandi would be similar to that for any faction found guilty of high crimes. Trials for treason and the requisite sentences would apply, and I would have no qualms about seeing such sentences executed, no matter how severe.

This is not likely to occur, however. Radio personality and nascent media mogul Glenn Beck has the intention of putting the establishment press out of business. While I wish him every success, it doesn't seem likely that he will accomplish this through his organizations alone. In addition to the advent of powerful alternative media sources, I believe it will be necessary to codify – or reaffirm – the nature of crimes against the Constitution and the American people. In this manner, we can thwart the designs not only of the press, but all global socialists operating in America.

Those whose speech and actions impinge upon the God-given rights set forth in the Declaration of Independence and codified in the Constitution are, by definition, excepted from protection under the First Amendment (as well as the Equal Protection Clause of the 14th Amendment). This is a very important concept to consider, because it is based on these presumptions of protected speech and equal protection for all that progressives and socialists have engaged in their predation upon our liberties.

If these truths can be acknowledged and widely accepted as such (as opposed to progressives' Orwellian interpretations), then the political disenfranchisement of liberals, progressives, socialists and Marxists can begin in earnest, and in the open.

20121028-02	10:04	Art	Fw: Graphic: Romney's Tax Plan
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I know many of you on this list probably plan to vote for Romney. Putting racism aside because no one will ever admit it, what's the logic?

Sifting through all the BS, Romney says he will cut taxes for the rich, increase Defense spending and address the deficit. How does that work? He says he will close tax loopholes but never says which ones and further can't even give us an example of one or two loopholes he would close, just to show us he's thought about it. Can someone please explain the logic to me?

<http://my.barackobama.com/Forward-This-Tax-Plan>

## UNDER MITT ROMNEY'S TAX PLAN

It would take  
**125 AVERAGE FAMILIES WITH KIDS**  
paying an additional  
**\$2,000 IN TAXES**



To pay for  
**ONE \$250,000 TAX CUT**  
for someone making more than  
**\$3 MILLION A YEAR**



Share this if you don't want to pay for millionaires' tax breaks.

20121028-04 14:12 Charis "Why Should Brazil Nuts Actually Be Called Bolivia Nuts?"

"Why Should Brazil Nuts Actually Be Called Bolivia Nuts?" by BoliviaBella

date unknown, (<http://www.boliviabella.com/why-should-brazil-nuts-actually-be-called-bolivia-nuts.html>)



Brazil Nuts, Shelled

Thought we'd share some rather strange trivia about the Brazil nut. To begin with, it isn't actually a nut. It is the seed of a tree, native to South America, that grows up to 150 feet tall. The seeds grow in large, hard pods the size of grapefruits, with about 12 seeds to a pod.

Aside from being high in protein, calcium, magnesium, thiamine and zinc, Brazil nuts are perhaps the best natural source for selenium, containing more than 1,000 percent of the U.S. recommended dietary allowance per ounce. Selenium has been shown to fight cancer, heart disease and even aging. However, too much selenium can also be problematic and Brazil nuts are also high in fat (69%). In addition, Brazil nuts contain up to 1000 times more radium than the next most radioactive food. [Because of the soil, I wonder? –SteveB]

But perhaps the most interesting trivia about the Brazil nut (called *castaña* in Bolivia, scientific name *Bertholletia excelsa*) is that the world's largest producer of Brazil nuts is not Brazil, it's actually Bolivia.

Brazil nuts nutrition facts: <http://www.nutrition-and-you.com/brazil-nuts.html>.



Brazil Nut Tree (towering above palms)

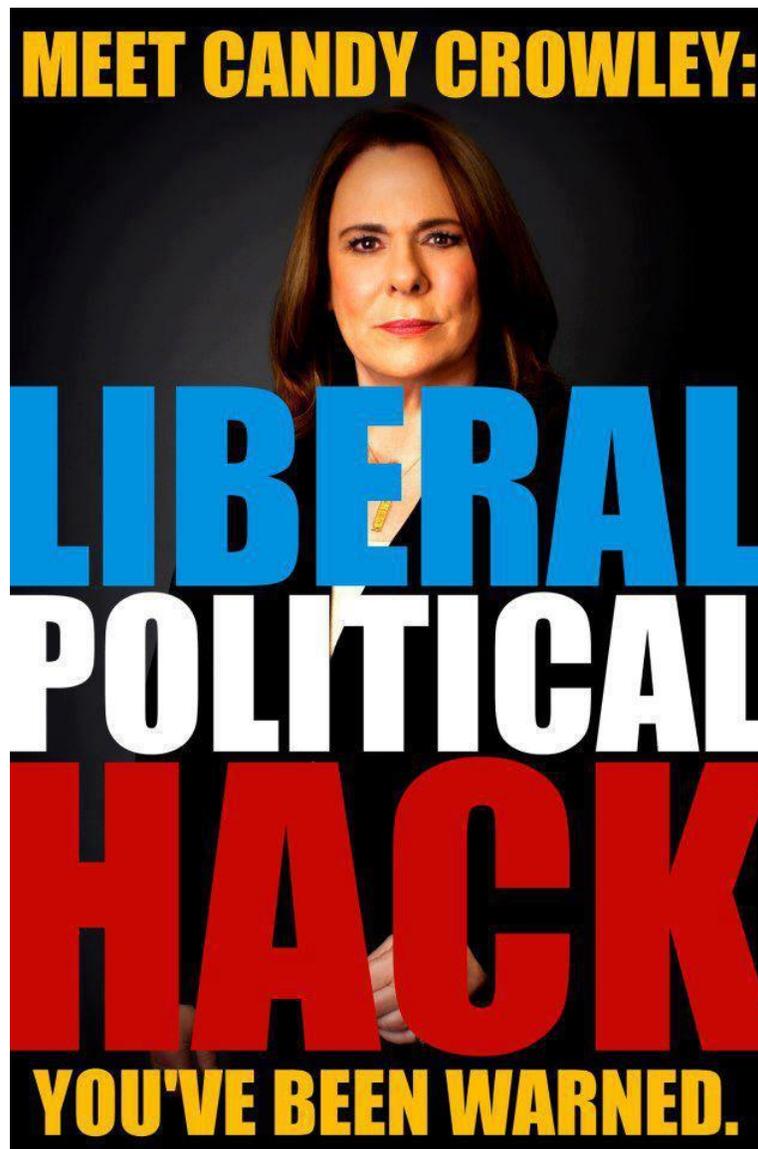


Brazil Nut Pod



Brazil Nut Seed

Very funny cartoons, if you don't like political toons, against Progressive/"Leftists," just delete this.



[All this simply because she was one of the rare newspeople to call R0mney down for a blatant lie??? I applaud her!  
-SteveB]



<http://www.accuweather.com/en/weather-blogs/photo/crepuscular-rays/704420?partner=msn>



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

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Your email address will always be kept strictly confidential.

Feel free to forward this Newsletter to anyone you know on the Right or the Left, though your motives might be different in each case. Regardless, PASS IT ON! Help keep your friends and acquaintances informed and thinking.

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# FRIENDS OF THE MIDDLE NEWSLETTER #258 — OCT. 30, 2012

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

**INDEX: Click here.**

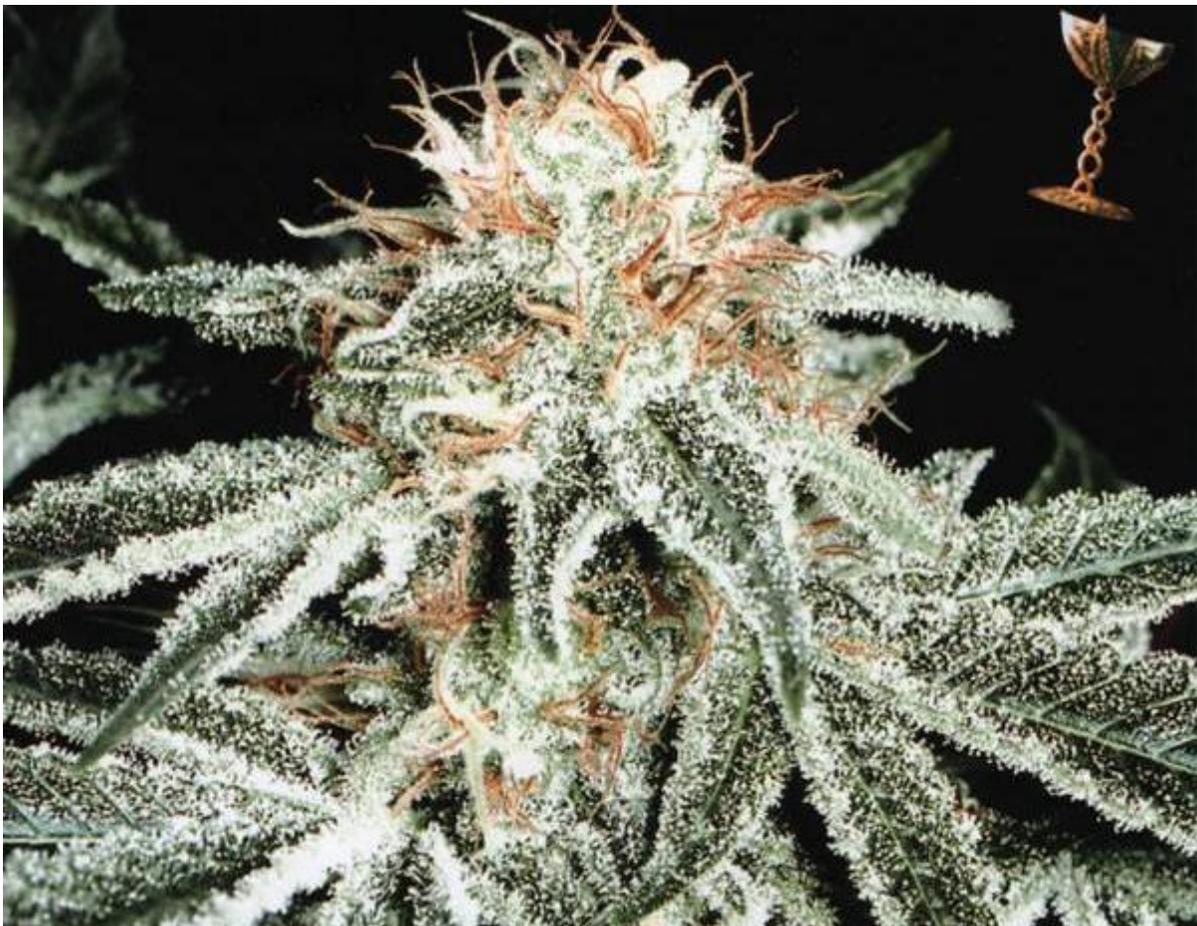
## **Vote for Pot?**

(posted by Steven W. Baker / SteveB, Oct. 30, 2012)

Today's article urges the conservative Middle Way of decriminalization and watchfulness, and I concur.

"Why Legalizing Marijuana on Election Day Might Not Be a Good Idea" by Tony Dokoupil, The Daily Beast

Oct. 29, 2012, (<http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2012/10/29/why-legalizing-marijuana-on-election-day-might-not-be-a-good-idea.html>)



(Voters in two states will decide on Election Day whether ending the prohibition on pot is a good idea. But before they do, they should know what might go wrong.)

No government has ever created a commercial pot market. But next week voters in Colorado and Washington State are poised to do just that, passing ballot initiatives that legalize, tax, and regulate marijuana much like alcohol. Both efforts are polling above 50 percent, but regardless of whether they pass, the country is bending toward historic reforms and the remaining prohibitionists are on the run.

Only about one in three Americans think pot should remain illegal, and that shrinking block of opposition is poorly organized and underfunded, producing no formidable spokesperson, not even a sad-sack orator to argue futilely, that legalization is the devil's work. "It's actually hard for us to find people to debate," says Rob Kampa, cofounder of the Marijuana Policy Project, a leading national reform organization. "I think a lot of folks have given up."

But such a profound policy shift deserves a two-sided debate. And, yes, despite the gin-clear failures of prohibition and the face-raking lies told about marijuana in the past, there remains a prohibitionist case to be made. This much is obvious: the upsides of legalization have been wildly oversold, and the potential downsides blithely ignored. I'd like to correct that balance, not because I support prohibition but because I think legalization should succeed or fail on the merits, as much as they can be known.

Perhaps the best neutral source on the subject is *Marijuana Legalization: What Everyone Needs to Know*, published earlier this year by Oxford University Press. The book is the work of four scholars who collectively bring nearly 70 years of experience to the issue. Because there is no "objective" choice on marijuana policy, they provide a stew of good data and best guesses: the raw material for an honest, logical debate they hope will benefit all sides. In the end, however, the prohibitionist side seems to benefit most of all.

The case against legalization begins with a defense of its opposite: the benefits of prohibition. Reformers sometimes say prohibition is pointless, because everyone who wants to use pot already does. But as state laws have softened, pot use has risen sharply. More than three million people started smoking it regularly in the past five years, and the rate of high-school experimentation is at a 30-year high. One in 15 high school seniors are smoking daily or near daily. And when a kid first lights up at about age 16, it's usually not with a cigarette.

Prohibition prevents an even more tremendous uptick, according to *Marijuana Legalization*. Remove it and you can expect a doubling or even tripling of the existing market, a spike to levels far surpassing any on record, and this in a country that already consumes the plant at three times the global average. What would be the health and welfare cost of such an explosion? The honest answer is: we don't know. No one actually knows what legalizing marijuana will do to adult use, teen experimentation, and public health and safety overall. No one knows because no modern society has ever tried it.

We know enough, however, for serious concern. The mantra of marijuana legalization is "Safer than Alcohol," which—to be fair—is generally true. But safer than alcohol is not the same as "safe." Every year about 375,000 people end up in the ER with marijuana-related "adverse reactions," more than any drug other than cocaine. Some of those cases are the result of multiple drug interactions, where marijuana gets the blame while cocaine does the damage. But for many tens of thousands of ER visits marijuana is the only drug mentioned. And there's even data suggesting that, as the authors of *Marijuana Legalization* put it, "marijuana can kill." Between 1999 and 2007, the Centers for Disease Control, somewhat curiously, attributed 26 deaths to cannabis use—half in the subcategory "dependence."

But at least pot isn't addictive, right? Wrong. More than 4 million people self-report behavior that meets the clinical criteria for marijuana dependency or abuse. The "capture rate," as scholars call it, was once about 9 percent, according to one study, but for people who start before age 25—as almost everyone does today—it jumps to 15 percent, the same capture rate as alcohol and just a percentage point less than cocaine. Drug treatment programs for marijuana have five times the number of enrollees as they did just two decades ago. Most are referred by the U.S. criminal justice system, but many are not—and enrollment has more than doubled in European and Australian programs as well.

The most common explanation is that pot has grown more potent over that period. In the 1960s and '70s, the percentage of THC (the stuff that gets you high) in good bud was usually less than 10 percent. Today, it's often 15 percent and higher, with average potency more than doubling since the mid-1990s, according to tests run on seized pot.

Marijuana has also become more variable, coming in hundreds of strains and edible forms. One medical marijuana company makes a chocolate truffle with 60 times the THC of a joint. Others make hash, hash oil, and specialty bud with more than 25 percent THC. This isn't automatically a problem, especially if potency means people use less to get high. But it's hard to judge whether your first truffle has hit the spot before you have an urge to eat another. And a greater percentage of THC means a greater high—so much greater that the Netherlands has proposed policing all products with 15-percent-THC-and-up like "hard drugs."

The upsides of legalization have been wildly oversold, and the potential downsides blithely ignored.

This high potency pot is pricey, and comprises only a fraction of the existing black market. But, again, that's only because of prohibition. If legalization were passed, high potency products would probably fall in price and blanket the market, according to *Marijuana Legalization*. That's worrying because even studies of low-power pot use—the only kind of studies available—show significant risks, especially for young people. Research released this past summer connected teenage pot use to a permanent drop in IQ between the first puff and early middle age. Other emerging literature suggests that pot use elevates the risk of schizophrenia and psychotic symptoms.

Besides harming themselves, pot users also put others at risk: driving high raises one's likelihood of crashing—and driving with a little booze and little pot is much more dangerous than driving with either alone. Marijuana use may also have measurable domestic costs. Only two holidays a year show a spike in sudden-infant-deaths: New Year's Day is one, and the other is the day after 4/20, when pot use is celebrated.

Finally, there are the long-term ramifications of legalization. Under prohibition, marijuana is an out-of-sight product with little branding and virtually no advertising. Expect that to change. The alcohol and tobacco industries traditionally get 80 percent of their profits from heavy users, and there's every reason to believe that marijuana sellers would need at least the same ratio. That means the pot business could be the basis for a third huge, blood-sucking vice industry, dependent on converting kids and supporting heavy users. "If we create a licit market," write the authors of "Marijuana Legalization," "we should expect the industry's product design, pricing and marketing to be devoted to creating as much addiction as possible."

Is there anything good that would come with legalization? Reformers argue that legalizing weed would goose the economy, free law enforcement resources to pursue more serious crime, and unclog the criminal justice system. They say it would empty prisons and undercut the black market. The problem is: none of this is necessarily true.

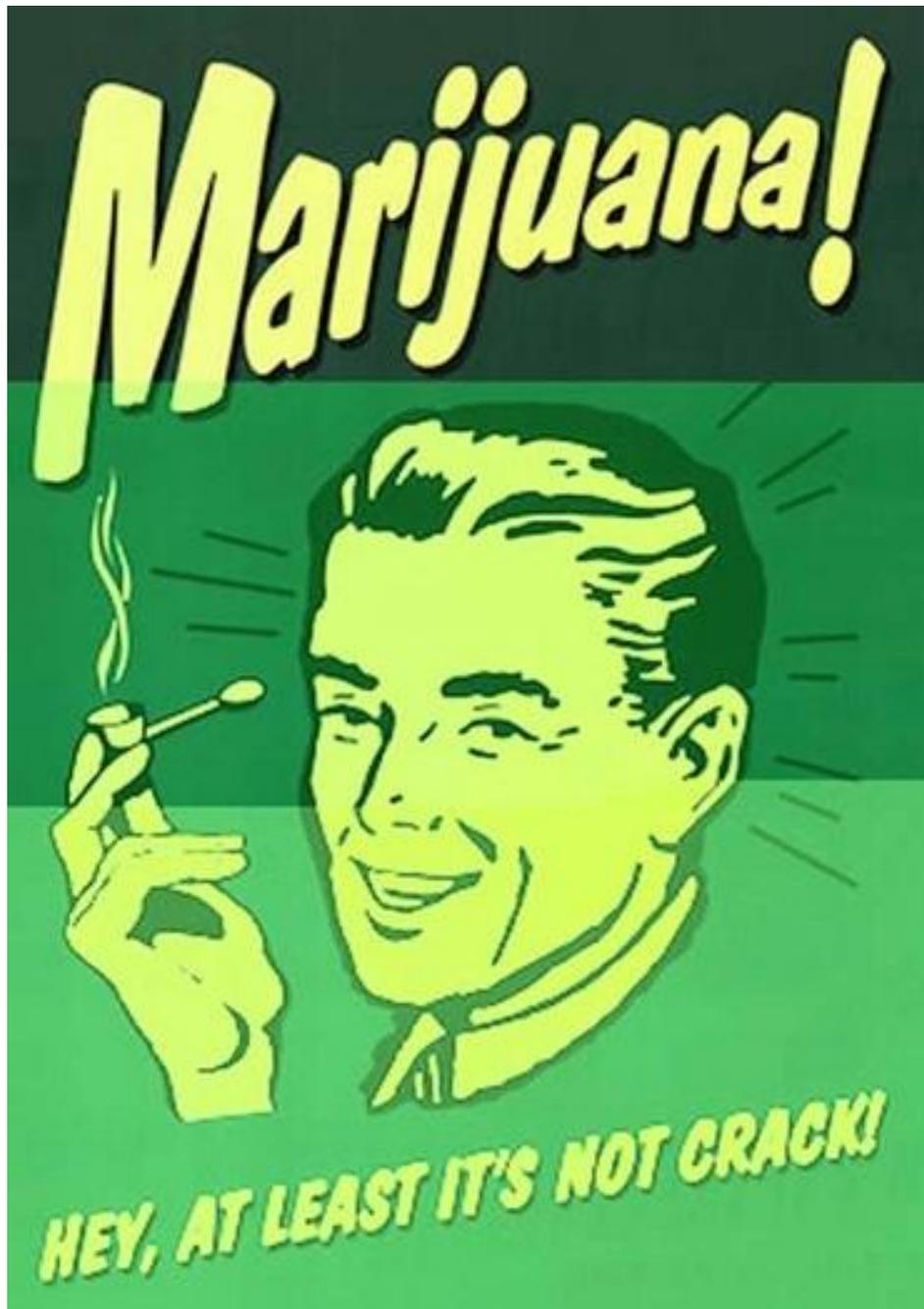
Start with the economics. Marijuana is not America's largest cash crop, contrary to a boast so widely repeated it's assumed to be true. The value at the farm-gate is no more than \$4.3 billion, or "somewhere between almonds and hay," according to authors of "Marijuana Legalization." Sales would skyrocket with legalization, but prices would plummet, deflating the overall market value. Bottom line: pot's not the new corn.

It's also not a surefire tax winner. The proposed tax is between \$30 and \$60 an ounce. Tobacco tax evasion is rampant at a fraction of that rate. And even if all the tax dollars came in, much of it would go not to schools or other worthy programs but to the costs of regulating and enforcing the new marijuana law. Lastly, because legal pot would be so easy grow, its job-creating power would be weak. It probably wouldn't support more than 15,000 growers and an army of minimum-wage service workers—not the kind of jobs someone touts on the campaign trail.

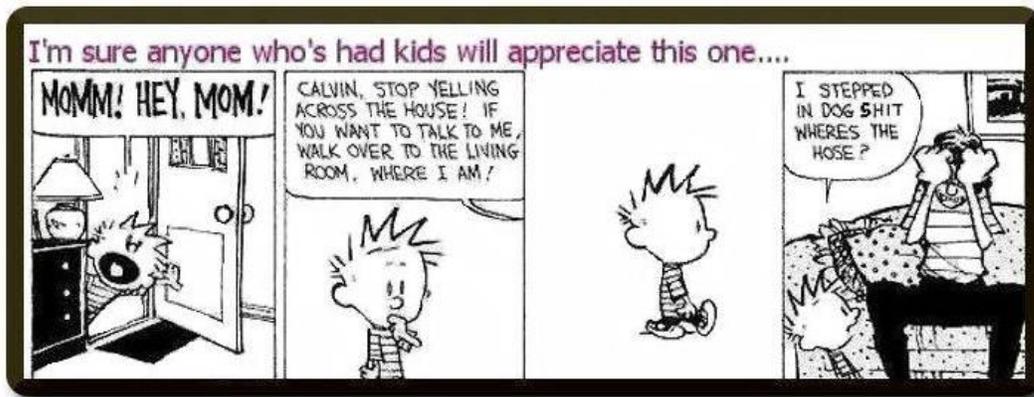
As for the war on pot, it's just not as high stakes as you might assume. About 750,000 people are arrested on possession charges every year, a howlingly large number. But virtually none of those folks end up in prison. Fewer than 400 people are serving state or federal sentences for marijuana possession alone, and many of those people plead down to that charge, or have serious histories of violence. Legalization wouldn't mean the end of marijuana arrests either, because police will still be called on to enforce the new laws, just as they do with alcohol. And it wouldn't mean the end of the Mexican gangs, which, contrary to another common boast, are diversified enough to survive entirely without marijuana profits.

And yet despite all this I still am not a prohibitionist. As the *Seattle Times* recently put it in an editorial endorsing legalization in Washington State, the relevant question isn't whether marijuana is good: "It is whether prohibition is good. It is whether the people who use marijuana shall be subject to arrest, and whether the people who supply them shall be sent to prison. The question is whether the war on marijuana is worth what it costs."

Quite obviously, the answer is no. In fact, of all the available options the status quo of arresting hundreds of thousands of people—most of them nonwhite, poor, and in for a world of collateral damage as a result of their arrest—is probably the least attractive choice, worse only than full legalization. The better decision is incremental reforms at the state level and a hands-off approach from the feds. Let people grow pot, and sell it, but not for profit, and without advertising, and in a tightly regulated marketplace. Tinker every year, adding new provisions and privileges as much needed new research comes in. And always update the law with a sunset provision. That way the process can't be hijacked by lobbyists and special interests—and only one thing goes up in smoke.



## STOP YELLING ACROSS THE HOUSE



This looks incredible; will have to watch it when I get home tonight...

"Check Out Joss Whedon's Hilarious Mitt Zombie Spoof" (w/ video) by Erik Kain, *Forbes*

Oct. 29, 2012, (<http://www.forbes.com/sites/erikkain/2012/10/29/check-out-joss-whedons-hilarious-mitt-zombie-spoof/>)

(*Avengers* director Joss Whedon gives Romney a boost just in time for the Zombie Apocalypse.)

Video: [http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player\\_embedded&v=6TiXUF9xbTo](http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=6TiXUF9xbTo).



It is my firm belief that politicians of all stripes, beliefs, and political persuasions should be mocked regularly and without mercy whether they're on your "team" or otherwise.

The people who hold the keys to the city, and who wield great power over the lives of millions both in the United States and abroad, should never be treated like royalty, should not be shielded from spoof and satire.

And so it was with great pleasure that I stumbled on Joss Whedon's Mitt Romney zombie apocalypse campaign spot:

I'll note that I find this sort of thing a welcome balm to all the actually negative, fear-mongering, and mind-numbingly serious ads we get these days.

I understand they're effective. I understand that statistically going with a negative campaign is more likely to succeed.

But they're wearisome and trite and pathetic, and both sides play dirty and neither comes away clean.

Naturally, all that's beside the point. We're talking about zombies here, which is perfect because last night was *The Walking Dead* night, and Halloween – and the election – are just around the corner.

So where's the Obama counterpart to this? Surely someone has likened the president to the undead by now...?

20121029-03	14:07	Art	Sad Loss ("Sandy Gains Power & Aims for Northeast")
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Beckie and I had the pleasure of visiting this ship and talking to many of the crew while it was tied up in southern Spain on a round-the-world trip. Most of the crew were just kids. Although the ship did have auxiliary power, it was a fully functional 18th century sailing ship. They were pleased with themselves at the time for having just gone through the Straits of Gibraltar under full sail. Quite an experience.

This report has two of the crew missing, let's hope it is wrong. I'm sure Romney will find a way to blame the President.

"Sandy Gains Power and Aims for Northeast" by AP

Oct. 29, 2012, (<http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=163846898>)

About 90 miles off Cape Hatteras, N.C., the Coast Guard rescued 14 crew members by helicopter from the HMS Bounty, a replica 18th-century sailing ship that sank in the storm. The Coast Guard searched for two other crew members. The ship was built for the 1962 Marlon Brando film *Mutiny on the Bounty*.

The rescued had donned survival suits and life jackets and boarded two lifeboats after the ship began taking on water. They were plucked from 18-foot seas just before sunrise.

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

20121029-04	14:22	Ben	Photo: Today's Healthy Lunch at Apple
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"Back in my salad days..."

Well, that's today. Delicious! You can see what's in it: mix of spring mix and Romaine with chicken, cukes, carrots, feta, cheddar, garbanzo beans, watermelon radish, all the seeds, nuts, berries and herbs plus a scant quarter-dipper of house-made orange habanero vinaigrette. All fresh, all good, and I rationalized a 'good boy' cookie.



20121029-05 18:32 SteveB "A Part-Time Life, as Hours Shrink & Shift"

This is the way unregulated and unethical businesses treat the American worker. A "job" used to be a job, and still is in Bolivia because it's the law! Can you imagine living and supporting a family in the US in 2012 on \$16,500/year?

But I'm sure Mitt will fix this problem, just like he'll fix everything, right? The source of all our problems is that damned, lazy 47%—the Obama voters and the part-time workers!

"A Part-Time Life, as Hours Shrink and Shift" by Steven Greenhouse, *The New York Times*

Oct. 27, 2012, (<http://www.nytimes.com/2012/10/28/business/a-part-time-life-as-hours-shrink-and-shift-for-american-workers.html?pagewanted=all&r=1&>)

(Jamba Juice uses powerful scheduling software that even uses weather forecasts, so more people work on busy hot days.)

(SPRING VALLEY, CA) Since the Fresh & Easy grocery chain was founded five years ago, it has opened 150 stores in California and positioned itself as a hip, socially responsible company.

A cross between Whole Foods and Trader Joe's, the company brags that its house brands have no artificial colors or trans fats, that two-thirds of its produce is grown locally and that its main distribution center is powered by a \$13 million solar installation.

But in one crucial respect, Fresh & Easy is just like the vast majority of large American retailers: most employees work part-time, with its stores changing many of their workers' schedules week to week.

At its store here, just east of San Diego, Shannon Hardin oversees seven self-checkout stations, usually by herself. Typically working shifts of five or six hours, she hops between stations — bagging groceries, approving alcohol

purchases, explaining the checkout system to shoppers and urging customers to join the retailer's loyalty program, all while watching for shoplifters.

"I like it. I'm a people person," said Ms. Hardin, 50, who used to work as an office assistant at a construction company until times went bad.

But after nearly five years at Fresh & Easy, she remains a part-time worker despite her desire to work full-time. In fact, all 22 employees at her store are part-time except for the five managers.

She earns \$10.90 an hour, and with workweeks averaging 28 hours, her yearly pay equals \$16,500. "I can't live on this," said Ms. Hardin, who is single. "It's almost impossible."

While there have always been part-time workers, especially at restaurants and retailers, employers today rely on them far more than before as they seek to cut costs and align staffing to customer traffic. This trend has frustrated millions of Americans who want to work full-time, reducing their pay and benefits.

"Over the past two decades, many major retailers went from a quotient of 70 to 80 percent full-time to at least 70 percent part-time across the industry," said Burt P. Flickinger III, managing director of the Strategic Resource Group, a retail consulting firm.

No one has collected detailed data on part-time workers at the nation's major retailers. However, the Bureau of Labor Statistics has found that the retail and wholesale sector, with a total of 18.6 million jobs, has cut a million full-time jobs since 2006, while adding more than 500,000 part-time jobs.

Technology is speeding this transformation. In the past, part-timers might work the same schedule of four- or five-hour shifts every week. But workers' schedules have become far less predictable and stable. Many retailers now use sophisticated software that tracks the flow of customers, allowing managers to assign just enough employees to handle the anticipated demand.

"Many employers now schedule shifts as short as two or three hours, while historically they may have scheduled eight-hour shifts," said David Ossip, founder of Dayforce, a producer of scheduling software used by chains like Aéropostale and Pier One Imports.

Some employers even ask workers to come in at the last minute, and the workers risk losing their jobs or being assigned fewer hours in the future if they are unavailable.

The widening use of part-timers has been a bane to many workers, pushing many into poverty and forcing some onto food stamps and Medicaid. And with work schedules that change week to week, workers can find it hard to arrange child care, attend college or hold a second job, according to interviews with more than 40 part-time workers.

To be sure, many people prefer to work part time — for instance, college students eager for extra spending money and older people earning money for presents during the holiday season.

But in two leading industries — retailing and hospitality — the number of part-timers who would prefer to work full-time has jumped to 3.1 million, or two-and-a-half times the 2006 level, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics. In retailing alone, nearly 30 percent of part-timers want full-time jobs, up from 10.6 percent in 2006. The agency found that in the retail and wholesale sector, which includes hundreds of thousands of small stores that rely heavily on full-time workers, about 3 in 10 employees work part-time.

Retailers and restaurants use so many part-timers not only because it gives them more flexibility, but because it significantly cuts payroll costs.

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, part-time workers in service jobs received average compensation of \$10.92 an hour in June, which includes \$8.90 in wages plus benefits of \$2.02. Full-time workers in that sector averaged 57 percent more in total compensation — \$17.18 an hour, made up of \$12.25 in wages and \$4.93 in

benefits. Benefit costs are far lower for part-timers because, for example, just 21 percent of them are in employer-backed retirement plans, compared with 65 percent of full-timers.

At the Fresh & Easy store here, Ms. Hardin is forever urging her boss to give her more hours, she said, but instead, "they turn around and hire more people." Some weeks, her boss gives her an extra shift when a co-worker is sick or on vacation.

Officials of Fresh & Easy, which is owned by Tesco, the largest supermarket company in Britain, declined to be interviewed. But the company noted that its entry-level pay was \$10 an hour, substantially higher than at most retailers, with quarterly bonuses on top of that. Also, the company said it offered excellent benefits, including health insurance to anyone averaging more than 20 hours a week.

Ms. Hardin said her recent quarterly bonuses averaged less than \$200, and while she appreciated the health insurance, she often could not afford the co-pays to see a doctor.

To supplement her income, she moonlights 15 or so weekends a year as a security guard at San Diego Chargers and San Diego State football games. But she still has such a hard time making ends meet, she said, that she has gone to the movies just three times in the last five years. Nor does she own a television.

"A couple of people offered me a used TV, but I can't afford cable," she said. "I have a tooth that's falling apart, but I can't afford the crown for it."

### Juggling Schedules

At the Jamba Juice shop at 53rd Street and Lexington Avenue in Manhattan, along with the juice oranges and whirring blenders is another tool vital to the business: the Weather Channel.

The shop's managers frequently look at the channel's Web site and plug the temperature and rain forecast into the software they use to schedule employees.

"Weather has a big effect on our business," said Nicole Rosser, Jamba's New York district manager.

If the mercury is going to hit 95 the next day, for instance, the software will suggest scheduling more employees based on the historic increase in store traffic in hot weather. At the 53rd Street store, Ms. Rosser said, that can mean seven employees on the busy 11-to-2 shift, rather than the typical four or five.

Such powerful scheduling software, developed by companies like Dayforce and Kronos over the last decade, has been widely adopted by retail and restaurant chains. The Kronos program that Jamba bought in 2009 breaks down schedules into 15-minute increments. So if the lunchtime rush at a particular shop slows down at 1:45, the software may suggest cutting 15 minutes from the shift of an employee normally scheduled from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Karen Luey, Jamba's chief financial officer, said the scheduling software "helped us take 400, 500 basis points out of our labor costs," or 4 to 5 percentage points, a savings of millions of dollars a year.

At Jamba Juice, which has 770 outlets, managers used to piece together their stores' weekly schedules on an Excel spreadsheet. It took managers about two hours to slot in 25 to 30 employees, all generally part-time except for the store manager and one or two shift managers. With the Kronos software, scheduling takes just 30 minutes.

The software keeps tabs on when workers are available, their skills and who makes the most sales per hour. While such software is a powerful tool, management's judgment is still important, said Aron J. Ain, Kronos's chief executive. "The budget is how many people you need at a certain time," he said, "but the magic is deciding who is to work at what time."

The rise of big-box retailers like Walmart, with their long operating hours and complex staffing needs, has contributed to the increase in part-timers.

Mr. Flickinger, the retail consultant, said when Walmart spread nationwide and opened hundreds of 24-hour stores in the 1990s, that created intense competitive pressures and prompted many retailers to copy the company's cost-cutting practices, including its heavy reliance on part-timers.

Susan J. Lambert, an expert on part-time work and a professor of organizational theory at the University of Chicago, said the use of part-timers had also escalated because of the declining power of labor unions. "They set a standard for what a real job was — Monday through Friday with full-time hours," she said. "We've moved away from that."

Many corporations place store or restaurant managers under strict limits about what their payroll or employee hours can be each week, usually based on a formula tied to sales. These formulas usually give managers little flexibility to increase the hours assigned.

David Henson, a former assistant manager at a Walmart in Thief River Falls, Minn., said part-timers would sometimes come into his office on the brink of tears.

"A lot of them were single mothers. They said they weren't earning enough to support their families," he said. "They desperately wanted more hours, but we weren't able to give them."

Some, Mr. Henson said, were eager to take second jobs. But if they said they were unavailable during certain hours, then the managers and scheduling software would reduce their hours further, he said. Many workers concluded that it was simply not worth it.

David Tovar, a Walmart spokesman, said that less than half of Walmart's hourly employees were part-time and that the company provided better wages and benefits than many competitors. But he acknowledged that part-time employees with less availability were typically assigned fewer hours.

Katherine Lugar, executive vice president of the Retail Industry Leaders Association, said that the industry's scheduling practices worked well, and that retailers did their best to accommodate employee needs. "Happy employees provide better service," she said.

She noted that millions of Americans preferred part-time work. "Many individuals come to retail because it is flexible, like the working mom who wants to work when kids are in school, or the graduate student," she said.

### When the Hours Fade

The day after Desmond Anthony graduated from Western Carolina University, he moved to Manhattan with the dream of becoming a Broadway actor and singer.

He knew he had to support himself with something else, and by Week 2, he had applied for 20 retail jobs, including one at the sprawling Express store in Herald Square, an emporium of slim jeans, sequined T-shirts and booming music.

"When I first walked into Express, I said, 'Oh my God, this place is awesome and there's music and it looks like a happening place,'" Mr. Anthony said.

Express offered him a job the next day. Mr. Anthony, 6-foot-4 and with a booming voice and big smile, said that after receiving just four hours of training, he began alternating as a greeter, cashier and sales floor assistant.

At first, he usually worked five days a week, often racking up 30 hours. But after several months, he said, he and many co-workers had their weekly hours cut to 12 or 15 and occasionally none at all.

"I'd go to the managers and say, 'What is the issue? Am I not pulling my weight?'" he said. "And they'd say, 'We just don't have enough money.'"

"'So how am I supposed to support myself?' I asked, and they said that was not their problem."

Mr. Anthony said it was hard to survive. At \$8.25 an hour, 15 hours a week equaled about \$500 a month. His share of the monthly rent was \$800, with several hundred more for utilities, phone and subway fares. Some days he went hungry, he acknowledged, and he repeatedly turned to his parents for help.

He and his co-workers held out hope that, come the holiday season, their hours would pick up. "But then they hired 15 more workers," he said.

The store's schedule for each coming week, he said, was supposed to be posted on Wednesdays, but often didn't go up until Friday or Saturday. With so little notice, he sometimes had to scrap plans for auditions.

At one point, he said, his weekly schedule dwindled to two assigned days and two or three days when he was supposed to call the store in the morning to see whether managers wanted him to come in that day.

Mr. Anthony quit last February, upset that Express had given him an annual raise of just 25 cents an hour. He now works at a Zara apparel store on Fifth Avenue, which, he said, gives him 30 hours a week and does more to accommodate his scheduling needs.

Express says that about 85 percent of its employees are part-time. "It's really more for flexibility than for anything else," said Michael Keane, the company's executive vice president for human resources. "It helps our ability to match associate staffing to traffic levels."

Mr. Keane said many young people were eager to work part-time there, attracted by a hip atmosphere and the clothing discounts for employees.

With regard to Mr. Anthony's complaints, Barbara Coleman, an Express spokeswoman, said stores aimed to post worker schedules a week or two in advance. "An associate will be notified in advance if they are scheduled for a call-in shift," she said.

As for the hiring surge that upset Mr. Anthony, Ms. Coleman said, as the holidays approach, Express typically increases its part-time work force by nearly 20 percent to accommodate extended hours and the rush of shoppers.

In New York's fiercely competitive retail world, Mr. Anthony's experience is not unusual. Workers at Abercrombie & Fitch, Nine West and Bed Bath & Beyond told similar stories.

A 2011 survey of 436 employees at retailers in New York City, as diverse as luxury establishments on Fifth Avenue and dollar stores in the Bronx, found that half of the city's retail workers were part-time and only one in 10 part-time workers had a set schedule week to week. One-fifth said they always or often had to be available for call-in shifts, according to the survey, which was overseen by researchers at City University of New York.

"We're seeing more and more that the burden of market fluctuations is being shifted onto the workers, as opposed to the companies absorbing it themselves," said Carrie Gleason, executive director of the Retail Action Project, an advocate for retail workers that helped conduct the survey and is financed by foundations and the Retail, Wholesale and Department Store Union.

That union wants more labor deals like the one it has at Macy's flagship store in Herald Square in Manhattan. Although that store has many part-timers, the more senior workers can reserve days off and learn their schedule six months in advance.

Mr. Flickinger, the retail consultant, said companies benefited from using many part-timers. "It's almost like sharecropping — if you have a lot of farmers with small plots of land, they work very hard to produce in that limited amount of land," he said. "Many part-time workers feel a real competition to work hard during their limited hours because they want to impress managers to give them more hours."

Ms. Rosser, the Jamba Juice district manager, amplified on the advantages.

"You don't want to work your team members for eight-hour shifts," she said. "By the time they get to the second half of their shift, they don't have the same energy and enthusiasm. We like to schedule people around four- to five-hour shifts so you can get the best out of them during that time."

### Comments from Workers Who Are Not as Dumb as Companies Think

#### from CSB (California):

Wow, this is a heartbreaking article. It's a wonder that this topic about our modern form of destructive capitalism is not even breaking into our social conversation or the elections. Only the "fringe" have been highly voluble about this negative business trend. Our collective fear has cocooned the dialogue. All we get are mainstream platitudes that the companies are also struggling. Rather hard to believe when many industries are still raking in profits, and continue to target unrealistic numbers of overvaluation. It's clear that the treatment of workers has to be on the global agenda, as countries everywhere are experiencing this mistreatment of workers. We've returned to the days of robber barons and indentured servitude.

FoxConn, Walmart, Amsplat, and many other companies that are facing worker strikes are fast becoming the norm in the business world, where workers have been relegated to the resource column of the balance sheet with little interest for protecting them as the valuable assets they really are. Until our political dialogue acknowledges this fact, any chance of real democracy is but a pipe dream. Corporations applying tunnel-visioned price tags onto everything in this world has had a disastrous effect on our collective way of life.

#### from M (New York):

This is extremely sad. However, I think that all of us who read this are part of the problem. How many of us are so eager for a deal, that we'll gladly go online and save \$1 instead of supporting our local workers?

#### from Cathleen (Massachusetts):

My daughter worked for Coldstone Creamery ice cream store and jumped through hoops to keep herself on the schedule. She went to work one day to find out they had called her, while she was en route to her shift, to cancel her. They sent her home. No reimbursement for her time and travel expense and no sentiment to her feelings of being nothing more than a number. They use that computer system that generates how many workers to staff the store.

My daughter was a smart, reliable and hard worker just getting into the workforce at 17 yrs. old. I was dumbfounded when I learned of these tactics that are "legal game" for businesses in Massachusetts. I certainly could not relay to her how when you are a good, honest worker a company will acknowledge that and keep you with them like the same kind of loyalty that I had growing up.

What exactly are we supposed to tell our children to expect and what should they aspire to be like in this workforce we have now? I, for one, am not so sure anymore.

#### from Bill Harding (Hudson, Michigan)

I am 72 and have rarely been out of work. Am still working PT. Done everything from aircraft mechanic to rough-neck to gold mining. Now I work at an auto auction. What I don't understand is why PTers are treated any differently than FTers. We do the same work, we just don't get as many hours; and that is not our fault.

To me, it is a form of slavery. The company controls how many hours I can work, which effectively controls how much money I can make, which effectively controls the rest of my life. People should get paid for what they do, not for how long the company allows you to do it. If I, or someone like me didn't do what I do, the company would not be in business. So, my job is just as important as the manager's job. People should be getting paid for the value of their contribution to the success of the business, not by the quantity of that contribution, which is not in their control.

But greed is a powerful influence and this "person", the corporation, has no soul and therefore no morals. So, until we can put the corporation back into its place and strip it of its "person" status, things will not change. And as long as the accumulation of "things" and "power" is the main goal in life, those who run corporations will not change.

20121029-06 23:56 Marci Photo: Special Moments #11



20121029-07 23:57 Dennis Graphic: Why We Can't Let Our Newspapers Go Out of Business #6





[http://topics.nytimes.com/top/reference/timestopics/subjects/h/hurricanes\\_and\\_tropical\\_storms/index.html](http://topics.nytimes.com/top/reference/timestopics/subjects/h/hurricanes_and_tropical_storms/index.html)



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

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# **FRIENDS OF THE MIDDLE** **NEWSLETTER #259 — OCT. 31, 2012**

*Welcome to always lively political discussion and whatever else comes up.*  
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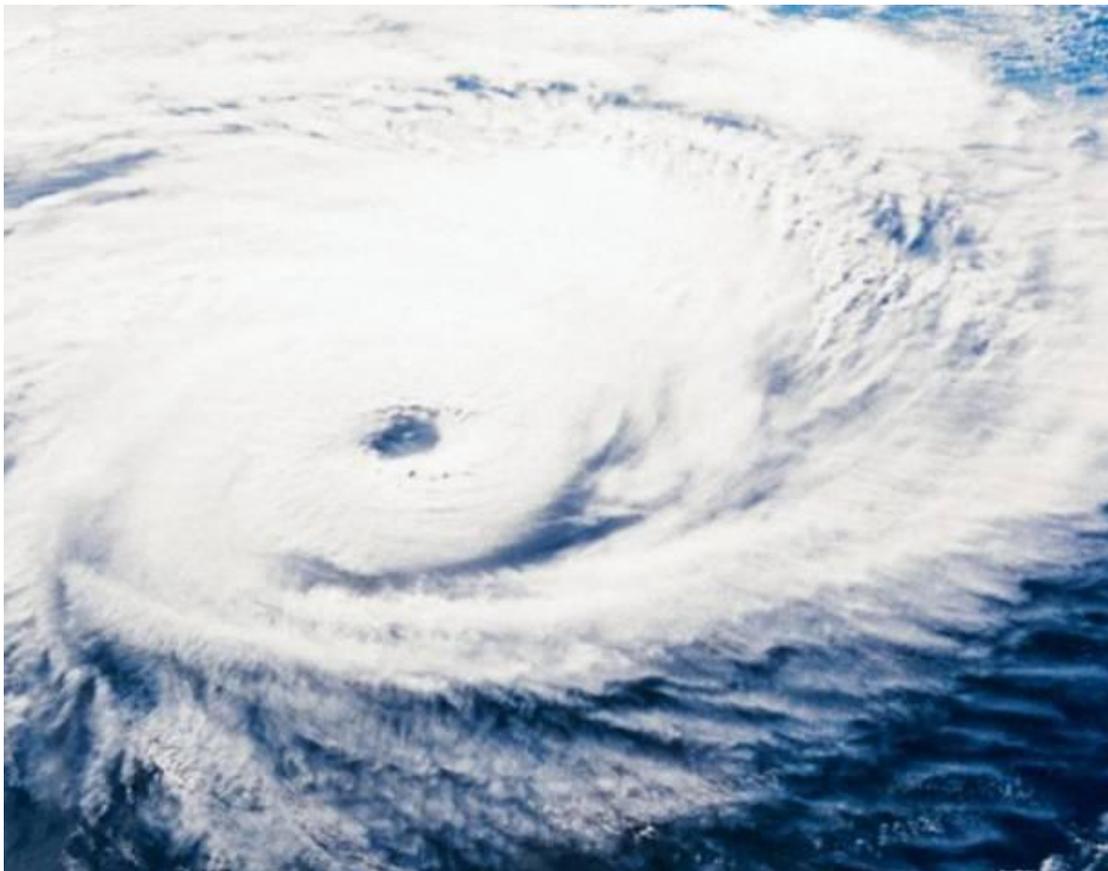
## **Let the States (or the 'Private Sector') Do It?**

(posted by Steven W. Baker / SteveB, Oct. 31, 2012)

At election time, "let the buyer beware" lest he be left "holding the bag". Here is some more terrible, unfair, stupid, and wasteful Republican thinking:

"How Would the Paul Ryan Budget Handle Disaster Relief?" by Elise Foley, Huffington Post

Oct. 30, 2012, ([http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/10/29/paul-ryan-budget-fema\\_n\\_2040878.html?utm\\_hp\\_ref=politics](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/10/29/paul-ryan-budget-fema_n_2040878.html?utm_hp_ref=politics))



(WASHINGTON) If it had been up to Republican vice presidential nominee Paul Ryan, disaster response agencies would likely face lower funding to handle the huge costs of dealing with storms such as Hurricane Sandy, a review of his much-touted budget shows.

The budget plan put forward by Ryan as chairman of the House Budget Committee requires massive cuts to discretionary spending, which includes everything but entitlements. Those cuts would almost certainly extend to the Department of Homeland Security and its disaster relief programs under the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA).

The ounce of doubt remains because Ryan's budget proposal doesn't include any specifics on FEMA itself. But it also doesn't exempt FEMA or Homeland Security from the standard cuts that it broadly applies to government services. The budget does exempt the military from many cuts. The Center on Budget and Policy Priorities wrote in August that Ryan's budget would likely dump the cost of dealing with disasters on state and local governments.

That's in line with a policy prescription advocated by Mitt Romney at a GOP candidates' debate last year, in which he said it was "immoral" for the federal government to play a significant role in disaster relief at a time of high budget deficits. Pressed by CNN moderator John King on whether he'd really send disaster relief to the states, he replied, **"It is simply immoral, in my view, for us to continue to rack up larger and larger debts and pass them on to our kids, knowing full well that we'll all be dead and gone before it's paid off. It makes no sense at all."**

While the opacity of Ryan's budget makes a definitive statement impossible, the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities noted that cuts to FEMA would be in line with his general budgetary approach. "This form of discretionary federal aid would be subject to cuts under the Ryan budget," the center wrote. "If it were scaled back substantially, states and localities would need to bear a larger share of the costs of disaster response and recovery, or attempt to make do with less during difficult times."

Third Way, a moderate think tank, wrote in March that the Ryan budget would cut funding by 62 percent for community and regional development, including disaster aid and insurance.

"This would mean less accurate predictions and planning for disasters, less preparation that can reduce the severity of their impact, and less timely responses," according to the Third Way memo. "It would set the clock back on disaster preparation to the days before Hurricane Katrina."

Although Ryan's plan never became law, it provides some insight into the still fuzzy budget priorities of his running mate, who has said he would adopt a separate but similar plan to the one introduced by Ryan. Romney has directly advocated cuts to FEMA and, like Ryan, supports broader funding cuts that would likely apply to the agency.

Romney's budget plan would lead to across-the-board cuts that would likely reduce FEMA's budget between 34 percent and 53 percent, FireDogLake wrote.

Brendan Buck, a spokesman for the Romney campaign, pointed out that the Ryan budget does not mention FEMA cuts and said that whether the agency would be exempt from cuts would be up to the appropriations committee.

"A Romney-Ryan administration will always ensure that disaster funding is there for those in need. Period," Buck said.

Disaster relief funding had traditionally been relatively noncontroversial, but more recently has become politicized as lawmakers seek to drastically reduce federal spending. FEMA nearly ran out of money last year when Republicans refused to pass an increase in the agency's funding unless it was offset by cuts elsewhere -- despite pleas from storm victims at the time.

In June, the House approved an appropriations bill to reduce FEMA's 2013 budget by \$183 million from 2012 spending levels, but Ryan voted in opposition. He voted for the continuing resolution for fiscal year 2013, which maintained funding levels for FEMA.

The agency could face major cuts under the looming sequester, which Ryan voted for and President Barack Obama signed into law, although both have been critical of the deal and said they did not want it to go into effect. The sequester would reduce funding for FEMA by nearly \$900 million, The *Washington Post* reported Monday.

"Mitt Romney's Argument for Shutting Down FEMA Ripped in *New York Times* Editorial" by Huffinton Post

Oct. 20, 2012, ([http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/10/30/mitt-romneys-argument-for\\_n\\_2042896.html?utm\\_hp\\_ref=politics](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/10/30/mitt-romneys-argument-for_n_2042896.html?utm_hp_ref=politics))

A *New York Times* editorial published online on Monday night ripped the argument Mitt Romney made for shutting down the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) last year at a debate during the GOP presidential primary season.

The *NYT* editorial board said of Romney's remarks:

Mr. Romney not only believes that states acting independently can handle the response to a vast East Coast storm better than Washington, but that profit-making companies can do an even better job. He said it was "immoral" for the federal government to do all these things if it means increasing the debt.

As superstorm Sandy threatened the East Coast on Sunday night, HuffPost's Ryan Grim reported on the comments in question from the debate.

Asked at the 2011 event if FEMA should be shut down so that states could take the lead on disaster response, the former Massachusetts governor said:

Absolutely. Every time you have an occasion to take something from the federal government and send it back to the states, that's the right direction. And if you can go even further, and send it back to the private sector, that's even better. Instead of thinking, in the federal budget, what we should cut, we should ask the opposite question, what should we keep?

Pressed on the issue of disaster relief specifically, Romney said he believes it's "immoral" for the federal government to take action if it means "[racking] up larger and larger debts."

The *NYT* editorial board criticized the case made by the Republican presidential contender in no uncertain terms:

It's an absurd notion, but it's fully in line with decades of Republican resistance to federal emergency planning. FEMA, created by President Jimmy Carter, was elevated to cabinet rank in the Bill Clinton administration, but was then demoted by President George W. Bush, who neglected it, subsumed it into the Department of Homeland Security, and placed it in the control of political hacks. The disaster of Hurricane Katrina was just waiting to happen.

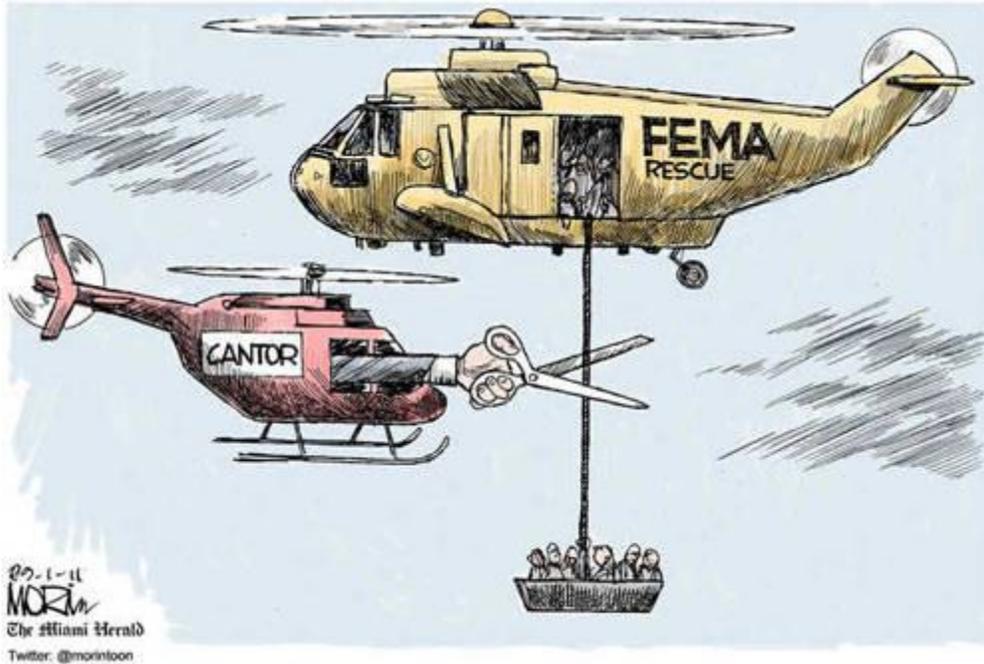
The Romney campaign sought to do damage control after the presidential candidate's remarks on FEMA resurfaced on Sunday night. An official said, "Gov. Romney wants to ensure states, who are the first responders and are in the best position to aid impacted individuals and communities, have the resources and assistance they need to cope with natural disasters."

HuffPost's Jason Cherkis reports:

Republican presidential hopeful Mitt Romney argues that federal disaster response should be handled at the state level, but when disaster struck Massachusetts, he was missing in action, according to some of the state's local politicians.

On Oct. 9, 2005, heavy rain storms caused the Green River to rise to historic levels and begin flooding into Greenfield, Mass. The flooding destroyed a trailer park and demolished swaths of low-income housing. Roads were impassable. The flood waters submerged the town's water treatment plant.

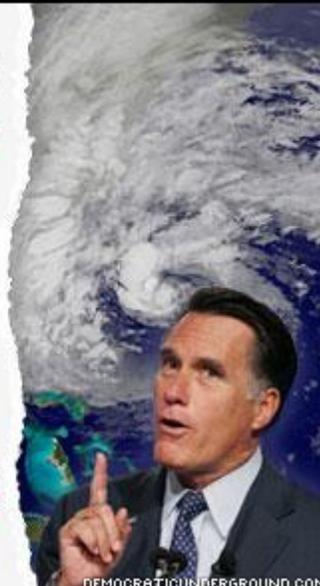
As the rain fell and the Green River rose, Greenfield's then-Mayor Christine Forgey tells The Huffington Post that she did not hear from Romney. About 75 people, including many retirees, lost their homes in the trailer park, she says. Still many more were displaced. Forgey says a resident opened up the high school and used it as a crisis shelter. A radio station launched a food and clothing drive and the Red Cross provided services.



## Romney: Federal Disaster Relief “Immoral”

Asked about federal disaster relief for recent tornado and flood victims at last night's GOP debate, candidate Mitt Romney called the spending **“immoral”** and said the Federal Emergency Management Agency should be **privatized** ... Romney said that the victims in Mississippi, Louisiana, Tennessee, Massachusetts, and other communities hit by tornadoes and flooding **should not receive governmental assistance**. He argued it is **“simply immoral”** for there to be deficit spending that could harm future generations. **“It makes no sense at all.”**

Think Progress, June 14, 2011, [thkpr.gs/m6Wbo5](http://thkpr.gs/m6Wbo5)



**FotM NEWSLETTER #259 (Oct. 31, 2012)—HYPERTEXT INDEX**

<b><u>DATE-ID</u></b>	<b><u>TIME</u></b>	<b><u>FROM</u></b>	<b><u>SUBJECT/TITLE</u></b>
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20121030-01 08:09 SteveB

Re: Sad Loss ("Sandy Gains Power & Aims for Northeast") (reply to Art, FotM Newsletter #258)

A couple of sickening images (R.I.P., *HMS Bounty*, lost at sea with the captain and one crew member missing):





[20121030-04](#) 09:28 Art Re: Sad Loss ("Sandy Gains Power & Aims for Northeast") (reply to SteveB, above)

Not second guessing, but was going out in this really a good idea?

[20121030-05](#) 11:38 SteveB Re: Sad Loss ("Sandy Gains Power & Aims for Northeast") (reply to Art, above)

Sometimes you are caught in a situation. Believe it or not, the safest place for a sailing boat or ship is often as far from land as you can get. Maybe that's what they were doing.

I know Cape Fear scares the hell out of me!

I've sailed though some pretty violent storms in the Caribbean when I thought I might not make it, and they weren't nearly hurricanes...but I'm pretty aware of all the permutations and strategies. When you go to sea in a ship or fight in a war (which, fortunately, I have never had to do, but you have and I thank you), you'd better be prepared for anything if you possibly can.

I have arrived in supposedly "hurricane hole" harbors shortly after hurricanes and seen many boats up on land, destroyed.

Some make it in harbor, some make it at sea, and some don't make it. I've always thought I'd prefer the sea route...

Too bad about the *Bounty*, though.

How was the storm for you there?

20121030-08

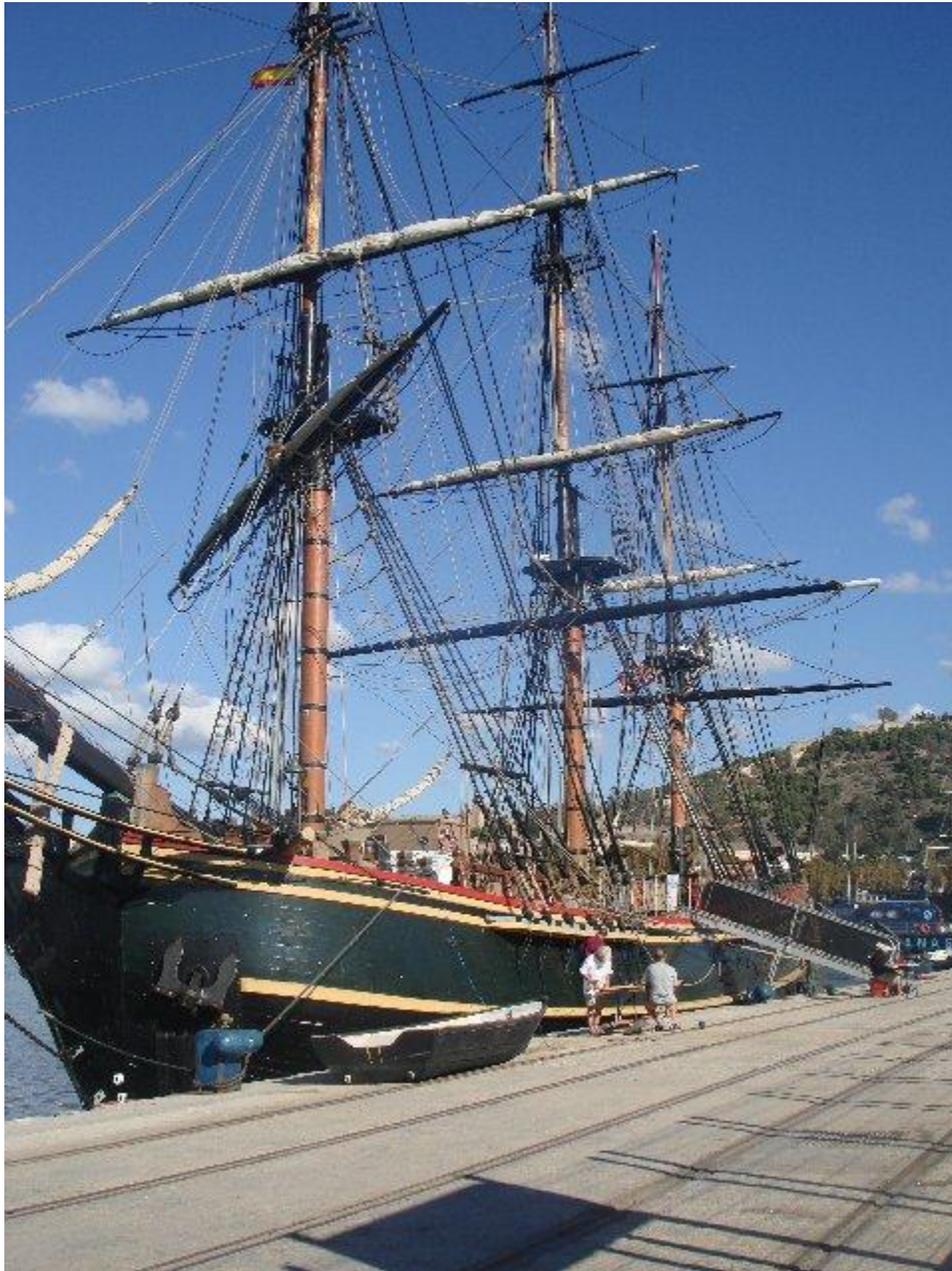
13:41 Art

Re: Sad Loss ("Sandy Gains Power & Aims for Northeast") (reply to SteveB, above)

You are obviously more the sailor than me, but what you say makes sense to me. I know that most big warships they would rather be at sea. Still, the *Bounty* is not really a tall ship, it is actually quite small.

We weathered the storm OK. No power loss and no major trees down. Very high winds for about 18 hours and lots of rain. All part of global warming.

Here are a few pictures of the *Bounty* in happier days:





[20121030-09](#)

15:16

SteveB

Re: Sad Loss ("Sandy Gains Power & Aims for Northeast") (reply to Art, above)

Thanks for the pics, Art. Spain, when you told me about?

A beautiful ship. I've seen her too, years ago, but I can't remember where...Maine? Boston? Freeport? Florida? I remember her, but not her harbor.

I too was impressed with the young men, though we didn't get to talk to any or board.

I know what you mean about "quite small" but she was huge compared to what I'm used to. The biggest thing I've ever sailed was only 54' long, but I'm more used to something in the 30's.

A storm like that...I know I would have wanted an aircraft carrier!

I have two great sailing songs for you (plus Jimmy Buffett and Bob Marley):

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Bw9gLjEGJrw>

[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pvr44d\\_m3Tw](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pvr44d_m3Tw)

Great memories!

<a href="#">20121030-10</a>	15:29	Art	Re: Sad Loss ("Sandy Gains Power & Aims for Northeast") (reply to SteveB, above)
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Actually about half the crew we saw were girls. They actually climbed out on the rigging and pulled in the sails. Wow!

<a href="#">20121030-02</a>	08:58	Pam	Re: "A Part-Time Life, as Hours Shrink & Shift" (reply to SteveB, FotM Newsletter #258)
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Steven Greenhouse's essay on part-time work needs our full attention. Greenhouse discusses the use of part-time workers in retail establishments like Walmart or Whole Foods, but there's another institution that exploits part-time labor: universities. At the state university where I taught for nearly 30 years, about one-third are tenured faculty. The rest are adjuncts or part-time instructors. I've known many college teachers who have cobbled together a living wage by teaching at four separate schools per semester. With the commuting that entails, it is a punishing schedule. The drift toward part-timers has been slow but inexorable, and those most affected are the least able to weigh in on the problem. At UNCG the question of whether to allow part-timers to serve in the Faculty Senate was recently rejected, making part-timers literally the silent majority. You don't have to be a Marxist to see the inherent unfairness in such a system, whether it be in higher education or high-end retail.

On a happier note, I heard a group of Harvard undergraduates on NPR yesterday explaining why they are pressuring their university to divest itself from fossil fuels, as they have done with tobacco, and South African apartheid. So far, the administration has turned a deaf ear, but these young people are motivated, smart, and committed. I believe they will accomplish what our generation has failed to. Let's hear it for the young!!--

<a href="#">20121030-06</a>	12:13	SteveB	Re: "A Part-Time Life, as Hours Shrink & Shift" (reply to Pam, above)
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I agree, I think it's a huge deal! Next, they'll try to turn public teachers' jobs to part-time.

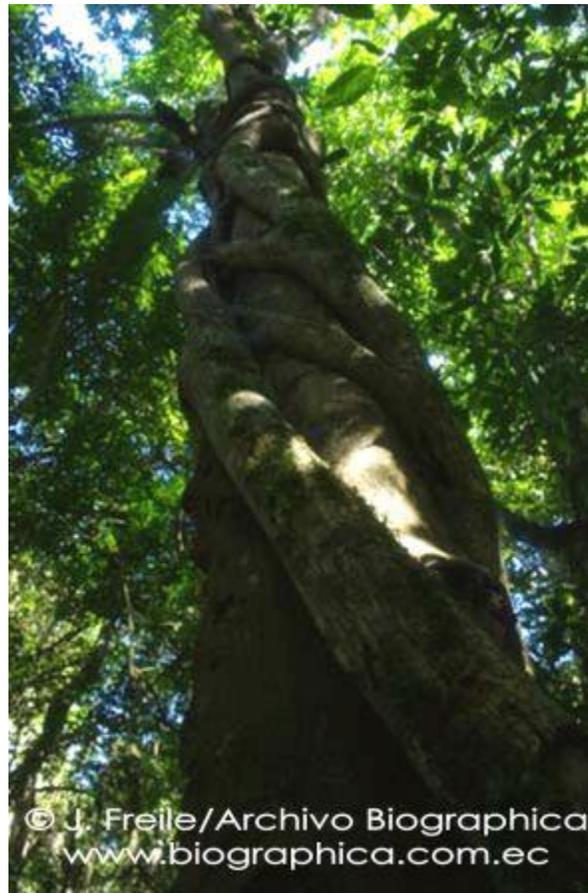
Come to think of it, why not make everyone work part-time but management. That way the 'private sector' could weasel out of the meager worker-protection laws even better!

<a href="#">20121030-07</a>	12:41	Pam	Re: "A Part-Time Life, as Hours Shrink & Shift" (reply to SteveB, above)
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In Greensboro, they've stopped paying teachers over the summer, making them ipso facto part-time. Ben always has to scramble to find summer jobs to fill in the gaps. It used to be you worked 9 months and got paid for 12. Now it puts teachers in a real bind. Enrollment in universities has increased 100%. During the same period, administration has increased 300%, with no apparent improvement. And administrators get paid WAY more than faculty. Aaaaaaargh!

"Legend of the *Bibosi* and the *Motacú*" by Bolivia Bella

date unknown, (<http://www.boliviabella.com/legend-of-the-bibosi.html>)



The legend of the *bibosi* and the *motacú* originates in the Bolivian forest. Around the *motacú* palm tree grows a corpulent tree called the *bibosi*. Its scientific name is *Ficus boliviana*. It grows on rocks and other trees—anywhere! It twists around other trees, especially palm trees, as a sort of "parasitic" tree species.

Its roots eventually reach the ground, growing downward along the trunk of its host tree. As the roots extend toward the ground they twist and wrap themselves around the host tree, and eventually the *bibosi's* roots and shade kill the tree that supports it.

This gave rise to one of the best known Bolivian legends: the legend of the *bibosi* and the *motacú*: a long time ago a strong, hard-working young man fell in love with a beautiful girl. When her parents found out about the romance, they were opposed to the relationship and immediately arranged for her to marry another young man of their own choosing.

When she was told of her impending marriage, the girl met one last time with her beloved. It was nighttime. They talked, they cried. Before saying good-bye, the young man held her in his arms and embraced her so strongly that they both died. It is said that the first *bibosi* and *motacú* trees grew intertwined on the spot where the young couple died.

(Thanks to Juan Freile for allowing us to use his photo.)

[20121030-13](#) 22:03 Charis Video: "Extreme Downhill Trail: Descenso del Condor in La Paz, Bolivia"

Whoa baby!

Video: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XZV7DcUvIfc&feature=youtu.be>.

[20121030-11](#) 18:19 Ben Photo: Today's Poultry Lunch at Apple

No time to talk about it, but red pepper slices on top burn on contact. Yuzu (Japanese citrus) glaze particularly tasty; sweet potatoes with miso glaze likewise. Somehow the very puckery cabbage salad and -mustard greens- went very well with the chicken and white rice. I ate every bit.



Beggars' Chicken with Pickled Cabbage and Mustard Greens

[20121030-12](#) 20:03 Marci Video: "How to Get to Mars. Very Cool!"

*iEspectacular!!!!!!!*

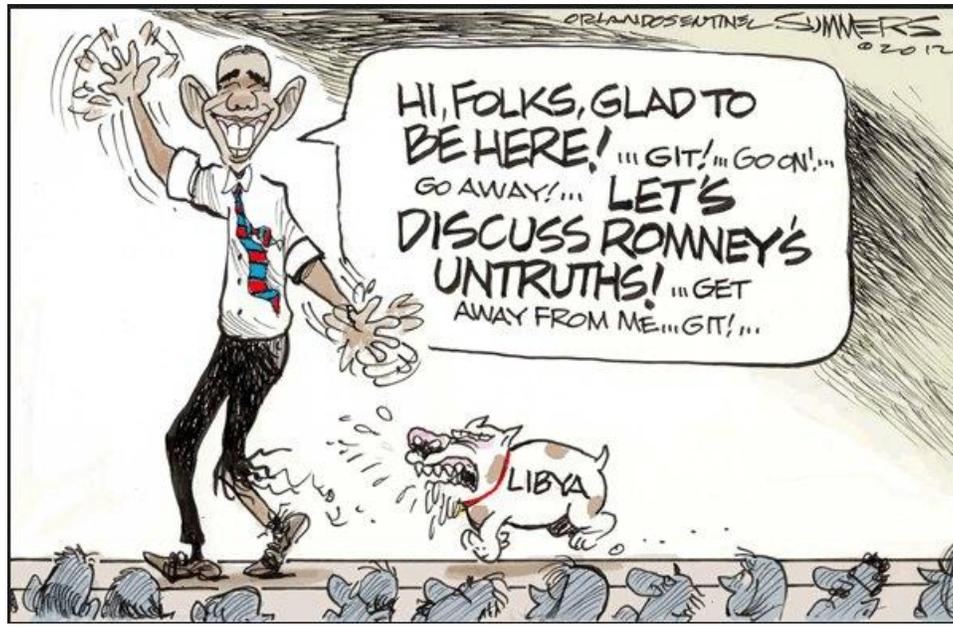
Video: <http://www.youtube.com/embed/XRCIzZHpfY?rel=0>.



### Meat head resigns

WASHINGTON — The head of the federal agency overseeing meat and poultry inspections is resigning, after repeated attacks by consumer groups.

H. Russell Cross, administrator of the Food Safety and Inspection Service, ran the agency during a time when there was a deadly outbreak of food poisoning caused by E. coli bacteria in undercooked hamburgers.



<http://www.dgtphotography.com/>



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Welcome to all our new members who may be here for the first time. We want to hear from YOU! To submit your comment, you can use the form on our website or blog, or reply to this email with your two cents worth. Be sure to sign with your desired user name.

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