



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

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>.

FotM NEWSLETTER #243 (Oct. 9, 2012)—HYPERTEXT INDEX

<u>DATE-ID</u>	<u>TIME</u>	<u>FROM</u>	<u>SUBJECT/TITLE</u>
20121009-00		SteveB	Money Problems by Steven W. Baker / SteveB ("The Illegal Donor Loophole")
20121008-01	05:55	Tom	Fw: Video: Obama's Second Term Tax Plans (by Dick Morris TV)
20121008-02	06:43	Tom	"6 Ridiculous Lies You Believe About the Founding of America"
20121008-03	08:55	MarthaH	Cartoon: Have You Ever Seen One?
20121008-04	13:50	SteveB	"The Maimed"
20121008-05	15:01	Pam	Re: FotM Newsletter #242 (reply to all)
20121008-06	15:23	SteveB	Fw: US Action Donation Request
20121008-07	15:24	Ben	Photo: Today's Seafood Lunch at Apple
20121008-08	23:10	Marci	Fw: Men's Turn
20121008-09	23:59	SteveB	Photo: St. Ignatius, Montana

20121008-01	05:55	Tom	Fw: Video: Obama's Second Term Tax Plans (by Dick Morris TV)
-----------------------------	-------	-----	--

Video: 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!

20121008-02	06:43	Tom	"6 Ridiculous Lies You Believe About the Founding of America"
-----------------------------	-------	-----	---

"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)

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:

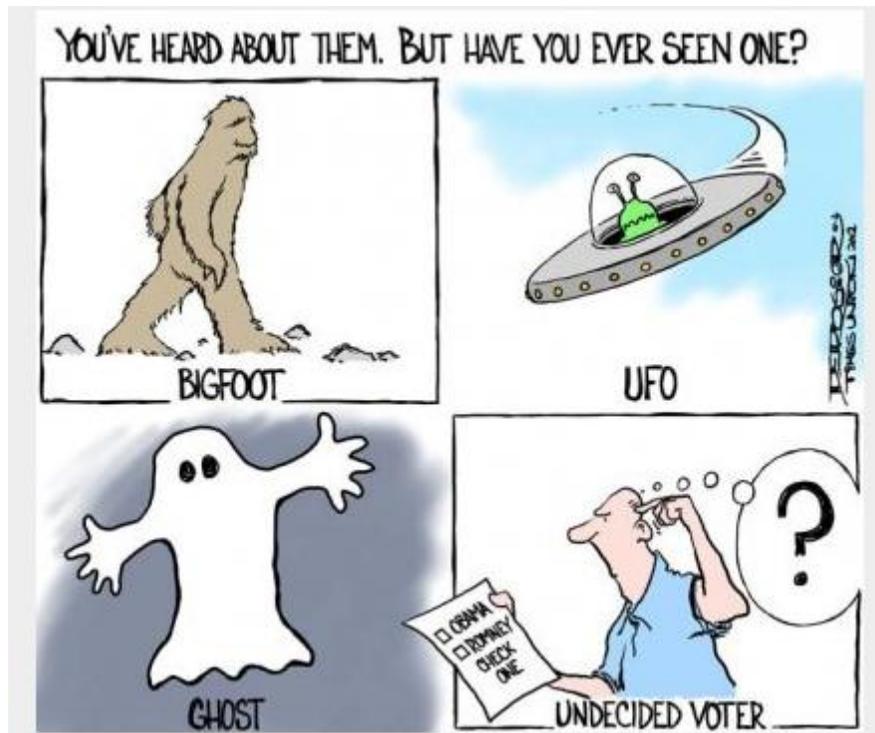
It would be a strange thing if six nations of ignorant savages should be capable of forming a scheme for such a union and be able to execute it in such a manner as that it has subsisted ages and appears insoluble; and yet that a like union should be impracticable for 10 or a dozen English colonies.

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.



"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.

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.

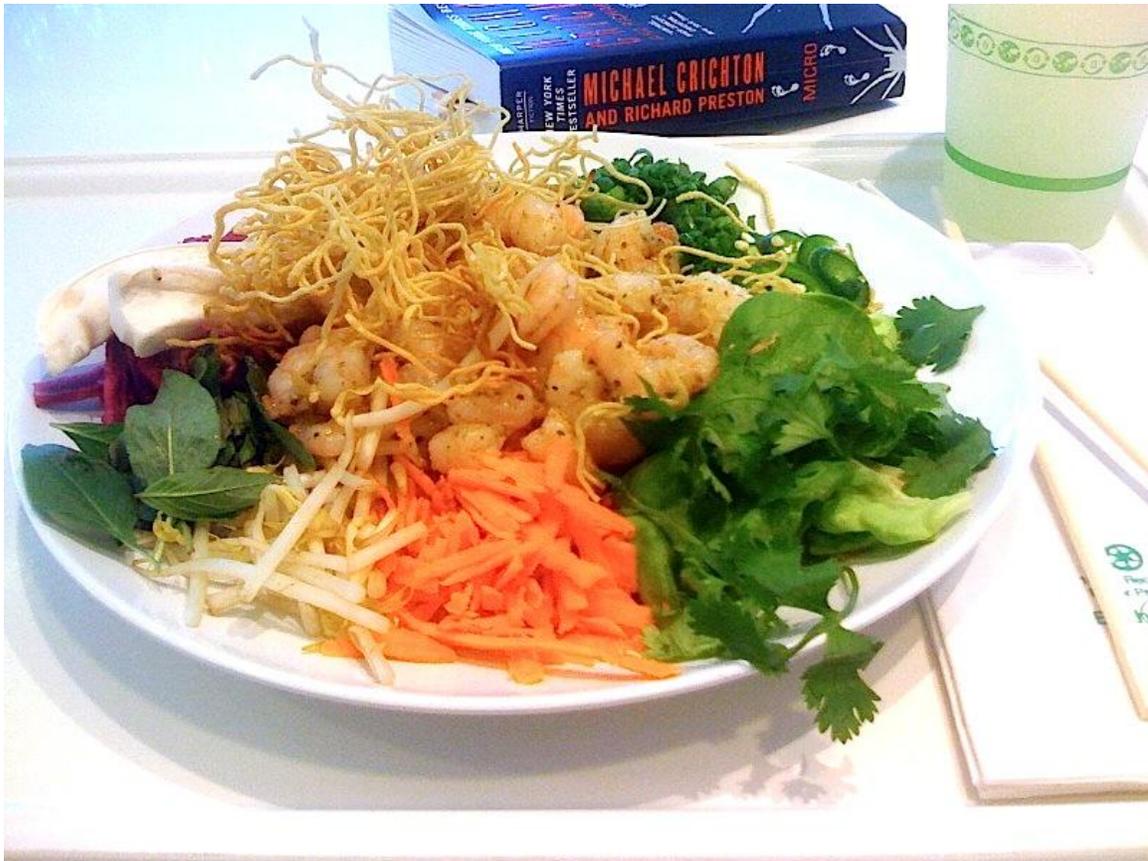
Sincerely, David Elliot, USAction / TrueMajority

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:

<http://act.truemajority.org/dia/track.jsp?v=2&c=78aG9gRQOqHrT5mzGHQ59amsKSwIFJZw>.

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 chilis, 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

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

original material ©2012 Steven W. Baker, all rights reserved