



## FRIENDS OF THE MIDDLE NEWSLETTER #246 — OCT. 12, 2012

*Welcome to always lively political discussion and whatever else comes up.*  
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### **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."



**FotM NEWSLETTER #246 (Oct. 12, 2012)—HYPERTEXT INDEX**

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<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="#">20121011-01</a>	10:45	Pam	Re: A Very Evil Human (reply to Dick, FotM Newsletter #245)
<a href="#">20121011-02</a>	12:26	SteveB	"Why is America 'The Sole Bright Spot' in World Economy?"
<a href="#">20121011-03</a>	23:59	SteveB	Photo: Dunbar Cave, Clarksville, Tennessee

<a href="#">20121011-01</a>	10:45	Pam	Re: A Very Evil Human (reply to Dick, FotM Newsletter #245)
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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/>

<a href="#">20121011-02</a>	12:26	SteveB	"Why is America 'The Sole Bright Spot' in World Economy?"
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"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?

20121011-03 23:59 SteveB Photo: Dunbar Cave, Clarksville, Tennessee

<http://redriverbreeze.blogspot.com/>



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

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