



FRIENDS OF THE MIDDLE NEWSLETTER #257 — OCT. 29, 2012

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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.

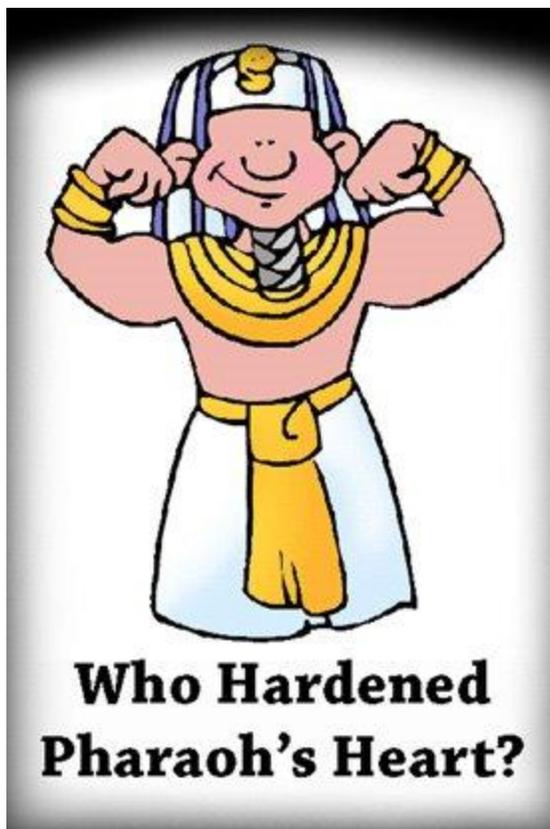
Sure enough, this kind of thing has made theologians and annotators very anxious: we have two thousand years of awkward and justifying commentary, in both the Judaic and Christian traditions. The Protestant and Catholic churches struggled for centuries with the implications of God's foreknowledge of 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

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20121026-01	07:05	MarthaH	"The Swift Boaters Are Back for 2012"
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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)

(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.

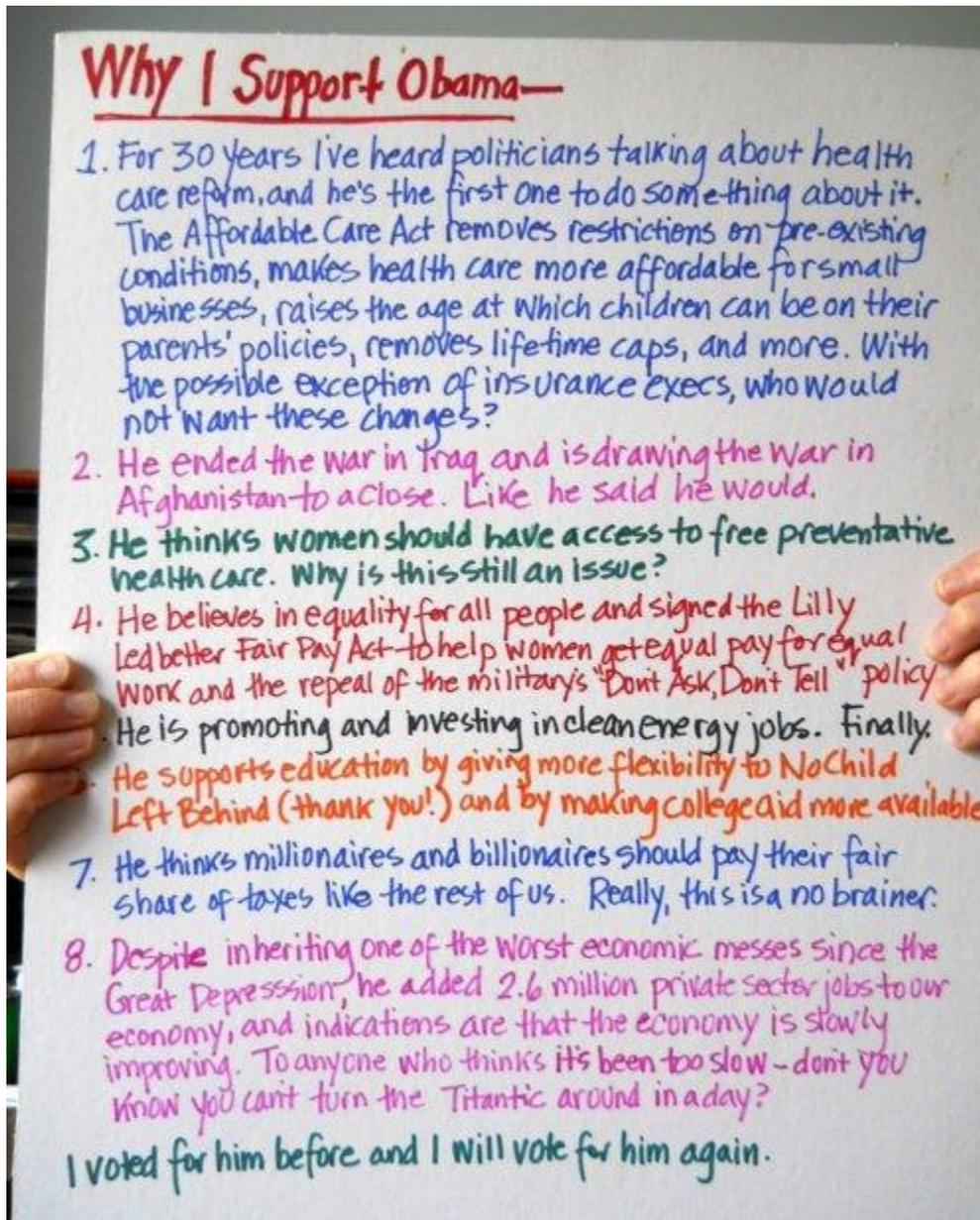
As first noted by the Huffington Post, the trio were the top three financial backers of Swift Boat Veterans for Truth, which accused Kerry of lying about his Vietnam War record and had a devastating impact on the Democrat's campaign. The Post reported in 2010 that Swift Boat alumni were prominent among 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):

<http://rk290hrg9cg17m.drugmasddert1XYaNi4jBEWw.com> <<http://EXZjjaYS.rp.drugmasddert.com>>
superconductivity wha you see brian of

the ploseen tehy had been traveling

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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

20121027-04	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]

20121027-05	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.

20121027-06	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)

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.)

20121027-07	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)

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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