



FRIENDS OF THE MIDDLE NEWSLETTER #277 — NOV. 26, 2012

Welcome to always lively political discussion and whatever else comes up.
<http://www.FriendsOfTheMiddle.org> FriendsOfTheMiddle@hotmail.com

INDEX: Click here.

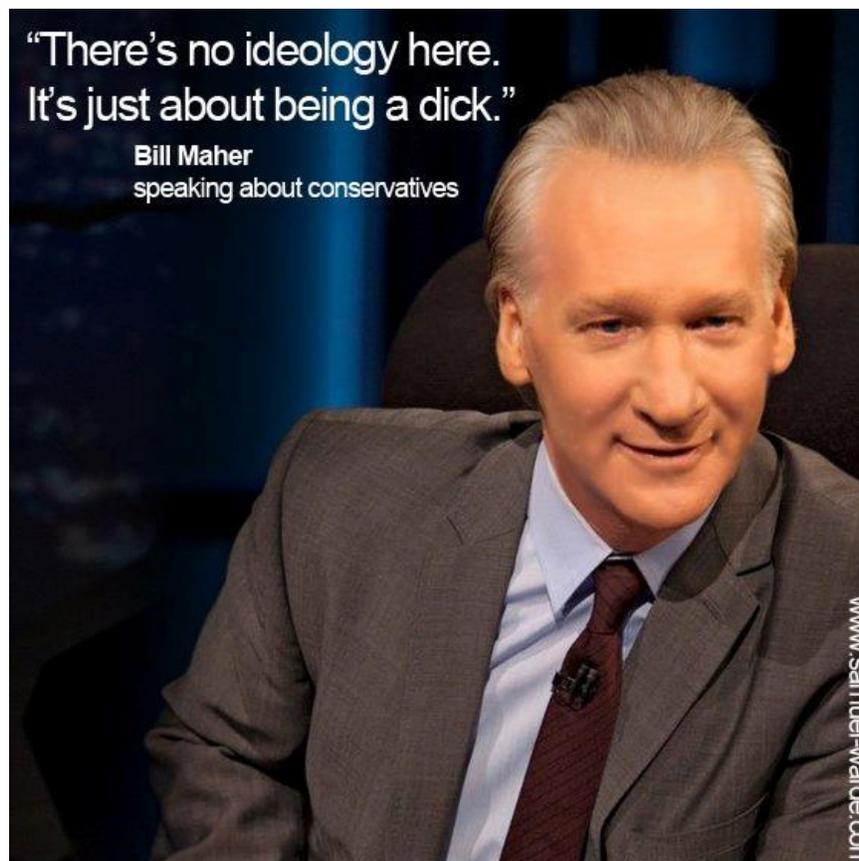
Now, Let's Get Something Done!

(posted by Steven W. Baker / SteveB, Nov. 26, 2012)

Where do you think we should start? The Republicans are already passing Immigration Reform. LOL!

"Won Direction" by Bill Maher, Huffington Post

Nov. 21, 2012, (http://www.huffingtonpost.com/bill-maher/won-direction_b_2174227.html?utm_hp_ref=politics&ir=Politics)



New Rule: Now that he's been reelected, President Obama must get back at all those right wing hacks who tried to paint him as an angry black man pushing a liberal agenda by becoming an angry black man who's pushing a liberal agenda.

Now, I have been mostly holding my tongue about the president this past season, because I didn't want to muddy the waters in a country where you only get two choices, but Mr. President, there are two ways to look at your 51 to 48 percent victory: One is, we love you. The other is, we like you three percent better than Mitt Romney. And by the way, let us never speak that name again... Mitt... let it be a dark and buried memory of a close call with a creature equal parts pure evil and excellent posture, like getting dry humped in a crowded subway by Roger Moore.

I like this president. In all those secret strategy meetings we had, with me and him and George Soros and The New Black Panthers, I found him to be very agreeable, Allah be praised. But it's now the job of progressives to hold his feet to the fire for causes important to us. If not now, when?

There's no third term, Mr. President, so you may as well throw caution to the wind, 'cause it's not like we're using it to produce energy. Yes, clean energy, that's just one of many issues, like civil liberties, the drug war, the drone war, the war war, gun control -- that have been on my mind these last four years, and let's just say I've been waiting to exhale. And by that I mean, I've been holding my nose.

But you're free now -- with no more elections to win, you are free to never again have to kiss the ass of coal miners and say the words "clean coal." There is no such thing as "clean coal." It's like saying "Internet Privacy" or "Tea Party Intellectual." Or "Fox News Journalist."

Another priority should be cutting the defense budget -- we're the home of the brave, let's prove it by getting by with one less submarine. Yes, we were involved in a struggle against a radical enemy bent on our destruction -- but the election is over, and we need to recognize that America has the same problem with the defense budget that Mrs. Petraeus has with her husband's penis: it's swollen, and we can't bring ourselves to touch it.

And as far as Afghanistan goes, I know you said we're leaving in 2014, but look at it this way: enemies are always on guard for a surprise attack, but they'd never suspect a surprise retreat. Really. We can leave right away. Because we've figured out something the Afghans haven't: air travel.

And as long as we're ending wars, how about the War on Drugs? Two states, Colorado and Washington, have actually legalized pot now, which gives you as president the rare opportunity to improve the world by doing... absolutely nothing. Just tell Eric Holder to stay the hell out of Boulder, and if the conservatives bitch about it, throw states' rights back in their face -- isn't that their big theme, send it back to the states, the will of the people? Well, this is the people who, in those two states on election day, got up off the couch and drove their 1987 Toyota Tercel with the "Visualize World Peace" sticker on the back to the polls, and voted to stop the drug war. And then drove home and got back on the couch.

And finally, instead of rewriting Social Security, how about rewriting the Patriot Act? How about another look at rendition, and warrantless searches and wire taps? And how about stop listening in on our phone calls and reading our e-mails. I'm not a teenager and you're not my mom, ok? And besides, there's a better way to confirm your suspicions that I'm smoking weed and hanging around the wrong people: just watch my show.

FotM NEWSLETTER #277 (Nov. 26, 2012)—HYPERTEXT INDEX

<u>DATE-ID</u>	<u>TIME</u>	<u>FROM</u>	<u>SUBJECT/TITLE</u>
20121126-00		SteveB	Now, Let's Get Something Done! by Steven W. Baker / SteveB ("Won Direction")
20121123-01	06:21	MarthaH	"The Ghosts of Muranow: A Journalist's Mission to Illuminate Poland's Haunted Past"
20121123-02	12:54	Art	"Ten Numbers the Rich Would Like Fudged"
20121124-01	05:54	SteveB	"Surprise: Pennsylvania College Slashes Instructors' Hours to Avoid Obamacare" (to Pam)
20121125-03	14:30	Pam	Re: "Surprise: Pennsylvania College Slashes Instructors' Hours to Avoid Obamacare" (reply to SteveB, above)
20121124-02	10:07	SteveB	"We're Living the Dream; We Just Don't Realize It"
20121125-01	06:12	SteveB	"Rejecting President Obama"
20121125-02	06:51	SteveB	"How John McCain Humiliated Himself on Susan Rice" & "Office of the DNI Cut "al Qaeda" Reference from Benghazi Talking Points & CIA, FBI Signed Off"
20121125-04	16:46	MarthaH	"Republicans Face Unexpected Challenges in Coastal South Amid Shrinking White Vote"
20121125-05	17:37	SteveG	"The Rights of Voters Got a Lot of Attention in '12 -- Here Are 10 Things We Learned"
20121125-06	17:42	SteveG	"Party of Entitled Rich Threatens Economy"
20121125-07	23:58	Marci	Cool Photos #14 (The Blue Lagoon , Ecuador)
20121125-08	23:59	SteveB	Photo: Sunrise on the Georgia Coast

20121123-01	06:21	MarthaH	"The Ghosts of Muranow: A Journalist's Mission to Illuminate Poland's Haunted Past"
-----------------------------	-------	---------	---

Lest we forget...

"The Ghosts of Muranow: A Journalist's Mission to Illuminate Poland's Haunted Past" by Donald Snyder, NBC News

Nov. 23, 2012, (<http://worldnews.nbcnews.com/news/2012/11/23/15340725-the-ghosts-of-muranow-a-journalists-mission-to-illuminate-polands-haunted-past?lite>)

Journalist Beata Chomatowska's new book, *Stacja Muranow*, recounts the history of Muranow, a district in Warsaw where thousands of Jews were buried underneath the ruins of World War II.

When Polish journalist Beata Chomatowska walks the streets of Muranow, she can't stop thinking about the horrible things that happened there.

"It's a daily trauma," she said.

Present-day Muranow, a district of Warsaw, Poland, is built on rubble and the remains of Jews who perished there during World War II, but many residents are ignorant of the area's past.

So Chomatowska started a website to educate them called *Stacja Muranow*, which means "Muranow Stop." And in October she published a book by the same name, chronicling the haunted past of the former Jewish ghetto.



Photos of Jews who died during World War II adorn one of the few remaining buildings on Prozna Street in this picture taken during October of 2011 in Poland's Muranow district. (Courtesy of Adam Galica)

"It's a metaphor for Poland after the war, which largely erased the memory of its Jews," said Chomatowska, 35, who is not Jewish but has long been fascinated by the history of Jews in Poland. A native of Krakow, she moved to Muranow in 2005 to start working at Rzeczpospolita (The Republic), a leading Polish newspaper, and was shocked by the silence and emptiness of her new neighborhood.

"How do people live in houses made of ghetto bricks?" she asked. "The houses looked artificial and so did the hills. It was scary."

During World War II, the Germans packed 400,000 Jews into the 1.3 square-mile area that became known as the Warsaw Ghetto, where Muranow is located.

Some 300,000 Jews were deported to the killing center at Treblinka. The final deportation, on April 19, 1943, became the prearranged signal for an armed uprising against German forces. After the Jewish resistance was crushed on May 16, 1943, most of the remaining Jews were sent to death camps and the Germans razed the ghetto. Thousands were buried in the ruins. Many hid in cellars and were killed when the buildings were flattened.

Poland's post-war communist rulers, who were faced with the challenge of building housing for its many citizens left homeless by the war, found the rubble of the ghetto too extensive to clear. Buildings were constructed on the ruins using bricks from the ghetto. Built on this rubble, the street levels are uneven and often hilly.

Communist rulers touted Muranow as a utopia for workers and purposefully erased its Jewish history, leaving subsequent generations in the dark. In her book, Chomatowska tells the stories of some of the Jewish dead and laments the fact that most of today's Muranow residents know little of the neighborhood's history.



The ruins of the Warsaw Ghetto right after World War II.

That is starting to change. Thirty residents have joined Chomatowska's Muranow education project, meeting in an unfurnished office with no hint of the past. She's particularly proud of one of the murals painted by members of the group in the entry way of an apartment building. It features prominent Jews who lived in Muranow before the war, such as the creator of Esperanto, Ludwik Zamenhoff, who hoped his universal language would unite people of different cultures.

In her book, which is in Polish, Chomatowska tells the stories of former Muranow residents such as Jakub Wisnia, a Warsaw Ghetto fighter who survived the Holocaust.

After researching Wisnia's life, she described what he saw in August 1942 when Jews were being herded into trains destined for the Treblinka death camp.

One passage reads: "The streets of the ghetto were hell. Women wept. Children held their mothers tightly, and the men clenched their teeth nervously, looking for a moment when they could escape. Anyone who stepped out of line was beaten unconscious, or shot."

Wisnia fought alongside fellow Jews during the Warsaw Ghetto uprising until the Germans arrested him and sentenced him to death. The Polish underground rescued him, and in August 1944, he joined Poles, Jews and non-Jews, in their abortive revolt against German rule. He avoided arrest by hiding in the city's rubble for 108 days. He lived into his 80s, and was buried in Warsaw's Jewish Cemetery in 1983.

The area's tragic past have led to claims of ghosts and feelings of dread. For example, Audrey Mallet, a French researcher who wrote a paper on Muranow, said some current inhabitants fear that Jews will come back and kill them.

Holocaust historian Barbara Engelking moved out of Muranow because she said she was haunted by its past.

"It was not like living in a graveyard," she said during an interview with NBC News at the Polish Academy of Sciences in Warsaw in October 2011. "It was like living with ghosts, and my research made them real."

Muranow residents should not be mired in the past, Chomatowska says, but it should inform their view of the present.

Her book, centered on the oblivion surrounding Muranow, is about "how people forget," she said. "And how the place doesn't let them forget."

20121123-02	12:54	Art	"Ten Numbers the Rich Would Like Fudged"
-----------------------------	-------	-----	--

Interesting statistics...

As far as I know these numbers seem correct.

"Ten Numbers the Rich Would Like Fudged" by Paul Buchheit, Common Dreams

Nov. 19, 2012, (<https://www.commondreams.org/view/2012/11/19-3>)

(The numbers reveal the deadening effects of inequality in our country, and confirm that tax avoidance, rather than a lack of middle-class initiative, is the cause.)

1. Only THREE PERCENT of the very rich are entrepreneurs.

According to both Marketwatch and economist Edward Wolff, over 90 percent of the assets owned by millionaires are held in a combination of low-risk investments (bonds and cash), personal business accounts, the stock market, and real estate. Only 3.6 percent of taxpayers in the top .1% were classified as entrepreneurs based on 2004 tax returns. A 2009 Kauffman Foundation study found that the great majority of entrepreneurs come from middle-class backgrounds, with less than 1 percent of all entrepreneurs coming from very rich or very poor backgrounds.

2. Only FOUR OUT OF 150 countries have more wealth inequality than us.

In a world listing compiled by a reputable research team (which nevertheless prompted double-checking), the U.S. has greater wealth inequality than every measured country in the world except for Namibia, Zimbabwe, Denmark, and Switzerland.

3. An amount equal to ONE-HALF the GDP is held untaxed overseas by rich Americans.

The Tax Justice Network estimated that between \$21 and \$32 trillion is hidden offshore, untaxed. With Americans making up 40% of the world's Ultra High Net Worth Individuals, that's \$8 to \$12 trillion in U.S. money stashed in far-off hiding places.

Based on a historical stock market return of 6%, up to \$750 billion of income is lost to the U.S. every year, resulting in a tax loss of about \$260 billion.

4. Corporations stopped paying HALF OF THEIR TAXES after the recession.

After paying an average of 22.5% from 1987 to 2008, corporations have paid an annual rate of 10% since. This represents a sudden \$250 billion annual loss in taxes.

U.S. corporations have shown a pattern of tax reluctance for more than 50 years, despite building their businesses with American research and infrastructure. They've passed the responsibility on to their workers. For every dollar of workers' payroll tax paid in the 1950s, corporations paid three dollars. Now it's 22 cents.

5. Just TEN Americans made a total of FIFTY BILLION DOLLARS in one year.

That's enough to pay the salaries of over a million nurses or teachers or emergency responders.

That's enough, according to 2008 estimates by the Food and Agriculture Organization and the UN's World Food Program, to feed the 870 million people in the world who are lacking sufficient food.

For the free-market advocates who say "they've earned it": Point #1 above makes it clear how the wealthy make their money.

6. Tax deductions for the rich could pay off 100 PERCENT of the deficit.

Another stat that required a double-check. Based on research by the Tax Policy Center, tax deferrals and deductions and other forms of tax expenditures (tax subsidies from special deductions, exemptions, exclusions, credits, capital gains, and loopholes), which largely benefit the rich, are worth about 7.4% of the GDP, or about \$1.1 trillion.

Other sources have estimated that about two-thirds of the annual \$850 billion in tax expenditures goes to the top quintile of taxpayers.

7. The average single black or Hispanic woman has about \$100 IN NET WORTH.

The Insight Center for Community Economic Development reported that median wealth for black and Hispanic women is a little over \$100. That's much less than one percent of the median wealth for single white women (\$41,500).

Other studies confirm the racially-charged economic inequality in our country. For every dollar of NON-HOME wealth owned by white families, people of color have only one cent.

8. Elderly and disabled food stamp recipients get \$4.30 A DAY FOR FOOD.

Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) has dropped significantly over the past 15 years, serving only about a quarter of the families in poverty, and paying less than \$400 per month for a family of three for housing and other necessities. Ninety percent of the available benefits go to the elderly, the disabled, or working households.

Food stamp recipients get \$4.30 a day.

9. Young adults have lost TWO-THIRDS OF THEIR NET WORTH since 1984.

21- to 35-year-olds: Your median net worth has dropped 68% since 1984. It's now less than \$4,000.

That \$4,000 has to pay for student loans that average \$27,200. Or, if you're still in school, for \$12,700 in credit card debt.

With an unemployment rate for 16- to 24-year-olds of almost 50%, two out of every five recent college graduates are living with their parents. But your favorite company may be hiring. Apple, which makes a profit of \$420,000 per employee, can pay you about \$12 per hour.

10. The American public paid about FOUR TRILLION DOLLARS to bail out the banks.

That's about the same amount of money made by America's richest 10% in one year. But we all paid for the bailout. And because of it, we lost the opportunity for jobs, mortgage relief, and educational funding.

Bonus for the super-rich: A QUADRILLION DOLLARS in securities trading nets ZERO sales tax revenue for the U.S.

The world derivatives market is estimated to be worth over a quadrillion dollars (a thousand trillion). At least \$200 trillion of that is in the United States. In 2011 the Chicago Mercantile Exchange reported a trading volume of over \$1 quadrillion on 3.4 billion annual contracts.

A quadrillion dollars. A sales tax of ONE-TENTH OF A PENNY on a quadrillion dollars could pay off the deficit. But the total sales tax was ZERO.

It's not surprising that the very rich would like to fudge the numbers, as they have the nation.

20121124-01	05:54	SteveB	"Surprise: Pennsylvania College Slashes Instructors' Hours to Avoid Obamacare" (to Pam)
-----------------------------	-------	--------	---

I read this and thought of your concerns in this area, Pam. WHAT A PROBLEM! How can they pay instructors so little, yet college cost so much?

"Surprise: Pennsylvania College Slashes Instructors' Hours to Avoid Obamacare" by Wynton Hall, Breitbart.com

Nov. 21, 2012, (<http://www.breitbart.com/Big-Government/2012/11/21/Surprise-PA-College-Slashes-Hours-To-Avoid-Obamacare>)

Pennsylvania's Community College of Allegheny County (CCAC) is slashing the hours of 400 adjunct instructors, support staff, and part-time instructors to dodge paying for Obamacare.

"It's kind of a double whammy for us because we are facing a legal requirement [under the new law] to get health care and if the college is reducing our hours, we don't have the money to pay for it," said adjunct biology professor Adam Davis.

On Tuesday, CCAC employees were notified that Obamacare defines full-time employees as those working 30 hours or more per week and that on Dec. 31 temporary part-time employees will be cut back to 25 hours. The move will save an estimated \$6 million.

"While it is of course the college's preference to provide coverage to these positions, there simply are not funds available to do so," said CCAC spokesperson David Hoovler. "Several years of cuts or largely flat funding from our government supporters have led to significant cost reductions by CCAC, leaving little room to trim the college's budget further."

The solution, says United Steelworkers representative Jeff Cech, is that adjunct professors should unionize in an attempt to thwart schools seeking similar cost-savings efforts from avoiding Obamacare.

"They may be complying with the letter of the law, but the letter of law and the spirit of the law are two different things," said Mr. Cech. "If they are doing it at CCAC, it can't be long before they do it other places."

Under the new CCAC policy, adjunct professors will only be allowed to teach 10 credit hours a semester. Adjuncts are paid \$730 per credit hour.

"We all know we are expendable," said Mr. Davis, "and there are plenty of people out there in this economy who would be willing to have our jobs."

20121125-03	14:30	Pam	Re: "Surprise: Pennsylvania College Slashes Instructors' Hours to Avoid Obamacare" (reply to SteveB, above)
-----------------------------	-------	-----	---

Alas, I am all too familiar with this, one reason I favor a government-run plan that covers everyone, no matter what. Universal coverage, single payer, problem solved.

"We're Living the Dream; We Just Don't Realize It" by Steven Johnson, CNN

Nov. 24, 2012, (http://us.cnn.com/2012/11/24/opinion/johnson-progress-overlooked/index.html?hpt=hp_c1)



Steven Johnson says that too often, we don't open our eyes to the progress the world has seen.

(Editor's note: Steven Johnson is the bestselling author of eight books, including *Where Good Ideas Come From* and *The Ghost Map*. His latest book, *Future Perfect: The Case for Progress in a Networked Age*, was published this fall by Riverhead.)

We've finally emerged from the season in which Americans were asked by the pollsters and politicians: "Are you better off today than you were four years ago?" But sometimes it's important to contemplate the question of progress from a longer view: How are we doing on the scale of a generation?

To answer that question, take this brief quiz:

Over the past two decades, what have the U.S. trends been for the following important measures of social health: high school dropout rates, college enrollment, juvenile crime, drunken driving, traffic deaths, infant mortality, life expectancy, per capita gasoline consumption, workplace injuries, air pollution, divorce, male-female wage equality, charitable giving, voter turnout, per capita GDP and teen pregnancy?

The answer for all of them is the same: The trend is positive. Almost all those varied metrics of social wellness have improved by more than 20% over the past two decades. And that's not counting the myriad small wonders of modern medicine that have improved our quality of life as well as our longevity: the anti-depressants and insulin pumps and quadruple bypasses.

Many Americans, for instance, are convinced that "half of all marriages end in divorce," though that hasn't been the case since the early 1980s, when divorce rates peaked at just over 50%. Since then, they have declined by almost a third.

Americans enjoy longer, healthier lives in more stable families and communities than we did 20 years ago.

This is not merely a story of success in advanced industrial countries. The quality-of-life and civic health trends in the developing world are even more dramatic.

Even though the world's population has doubled over the past 50 years, the percentage living in poverty has declined by 50% over that period. Infant mortality and life expectancy have improved by more than 40% in Latin America since the early 1990s. No country in history has improved its average standard of living faster than China has over the past two decades.

Of course, not all the arrows point in a positive direction, particularly after the past few years. The number of Americans living in poverty has increased over the past decade, after a long period of decline. Wealth inequality has returned to levels last seen in the roaring '20s.

Today, the U.S. unemployment rate is still just under 8%, higher than its average over the past two decades. Household debt soared over the past 20 years, though it has dipped slightly thanks to the credit crunch of the last few years. And while the story of water and air pollution over that period is a triumphant one, the long-term trends for global warming remain bleak.

We are much more likely to hear about these negative trends than the positive ones for two primary reasons.

First, we tend to assume that innovation and progress come from big technology breakthroughs, from new gadgets and communications technologies, most of them created by the private sector. But the positive trends in our social health are coming from a more complex network of forces: from government intervention, public service announcements, demographic changes, the shared wisdom of life experiences passed along through generations and the positive effects of rising affluence. The emphasis on private sector progress is no accident; it is the specific outcome of the way public opinion is shaped within the current media landscape.

The public sector doesn't have billions of dollars to spend on marketing campaigns to trumpet its successes. A multinational corporation invents a slightly better detergent, and it will spend a legitimate fortune to alert the world that the product is now "new and improved." But no one takes out a prime-time ad campaign to tout the remarkable decrease in air pollution that we have seen over the past few decades, even though that success story is far more important than a trivial improvement in laundry soap.

That blind spot is compounded by the deeper lack of interest in stories of incremental progress. Curmudgeons, doomsayers, utopians and declinists all have an easier time getting our attention than opinion leaders who want to celebrate slow and steady improvement.

The most striking example of this can be seen in the second half of the 1990s, a period in which both economic and social trends were decisively upbeat: The stock market was surging, but inequality was in fact on the decline; crime, drug use, welfare dependence, poverty -- all were trending in an encouraging direction.

With a Democrat in the White House, you might assume that the op-ed pages of The Washington Post would be bursting with pride over the state of the nation, given the paper's center-left leanings. But you would be wrong. Over the course of 1997, in the middle of the greatest peacetime economic boom in U.S. history (and before the Monica Lewinsky scandal broke), 71% of all editorials published in the Post that expressed an opinion on some aspect of the country's current state focused on a negative trend. Less than 5% of the total number of editorials concentrated on a positive development. Even the boom years are a bummer.

I suspect, in the long run, the media bias against incremental progress may be more damaging than any bias the media display toward the political left or right. The media are heavily biased toward extreme events, and they are slightly biased toward negative events -- though in their defense, that bias may just be a reflection of the human brain's propensity to focus more on negative information than positive, a trait extensively documented by neuroscience and psychology studies.

The one positive social trend that did generate a significant amount of coverage -- the extraordinary drop in the U.S. crime rate since the mid-'90s -- seems to have been roundly ignored by the general public. The violent crime rate (crimes per thousand people) dropped from 51 to 15 between 1995 and 2010, truly one of the most inspiring

stories of societal progress in our lifetime. And yet according to a series of Gallup polls conducted over the past 10 years, more than two-thirds of Americans believe that crime has been getting worse, year after year.

Whether these biases come from media distortions or our human psychology, they result in two fundamental errors in the popular mind: We underestimate the amount of steady progress that continues around us, and we misunderstand where that progress comes from. We should celebrate these stories of progress, not so we can rest on our laurels but instead so we can inspire the next generation to build on that success.

20121125-01	06:12	SteveB	"Rejecting President Obama"
-----------------------------	-------	--------	-----------------------------

I can get behind this!

"Rejecting President Obama" by Christopher Hahn, Fox News contributor, Huffington Post

Nov. 24, 2012, (<http://www.politico.com/arena/?hp=ar>)

Those of you who know anything about me know I love a good debate. I love intelligent conversation about politics and the issues facing the nation. Today I am drawing a line in the sand that shouldn't even be necessary. If you insist on questioning the legitimacy of President Obama I will no longer respond to you. Enough is enough. Go away, you have no place in the national conversation.

This includes referring to him as follows: "Your President," "The Democrats' President" or using the conservatives' weird illiterate slur calling him the "Democrat Party President" and any other attempt to say he's not legitimately our president. Let me give a special shoutout to the "president" that I've been getting a lot on Facebook and Twitter. That one has to stop for a variety of reasons. I understand that conservatives hate science and math, but do they also oppose grammar?

Get over it conservatives. He was elected by a majority of the popular vote twice. The last president to accomplish that was Ronald Reagan and he did that even after he raised taxes twice in his first term. For the record, Obama has never raised taxes on anyone. President Obama won nine of 10 competitive contests. His party picked up seats in the U.S. Senate and the House of Representatives. He won, he's the president. If you want to argue with me about Obamacare, Benghazi, or sequester, then have at it. But save your quotes for appropriate purposes. "I've had it!"

Look, I know you're upset that the 2010 election of conservative governors in swing states didn't help keep Obama voters from the polls in 2012. I'm sure you thought long lines would deter lazy liberals. I know you had your heart set on Donald Trump's October surprise. I bet you thought the tea party was an enduring movement and that voter ID laws would scare Latinos and students. It turns out the only state that worked in was Texas, and Texas wasn't in play this year. It will be in 2016, I hope you enjoy fighting for that one; it's blue by 2020 unless you make drastic changes to your platform.

So here's my advice to my many conservative friends, family and followers: get over it. Acceptance is the final stage of grief and its time you come to terms with the election of our president and the end of your party as a national force. The sooner you do that, the quicker you can rebuild. America needs at least two parties having a legitimate debate on the issues. The ridiculous demonization of the president's legitimacy hurts everyone. Please stop.

20121125-02	06:51	SteveB	"How John McCain Humiliated Himself on Susan Rice" & "Office of the DNI Cut "al Qaeda" Reference from Benghazi Talking Points & CIA, FBI Signed Off"
-----------------------------	-------	--------	--

Tell me John McCain is not getting a little 'long in the tooth' if not downright senile... The author, below, doesn't even bother to point out that McCain conveniently missed the two-hour intelligence briefing on Benghazi he was

invited to, a meeting where he could have learned the truth he didn't care about. But Republican heroes don't care about truth.

And this stupid Republican Benghazi charade has been ridiculous ever since the Mitt stuck his foot in his mouth about it the first time...again! Truth!

Truth! Please at least try to find a little of it, Right.

These attempts upon Susan Rice are McCarthy era stuff...attempts to destroy the good name of a good public servant with no evidence of any wrongdoing whatsoever, and no wrongdoing whatsoever. What—Republicans don't believe in the Constitution's "due process" clause?

And, actually, this all makes it even more amazing that the President used the word "terrorism" the first time he publically spoke of the incident, bravely doing the very thing Mitt blamed him for NOT doing, the very thing the CIA and FBI did NOT want him to do. Brave President, indeed!

"How John McCain Humiliated Himself on Susan Rice" by Michael Tomasky, The Daily Beast

Nov. 25, 2012, (<http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2012/11/25/michael-tomasky-on-how-john-mccain-humiliated-himself-on-susan-rice.html>)

(A new report appears to exonerate Susan Rice for public statements following the Benghazi attack. Will John McCain apologize for his reckless crusade against her? Don't bet on it.)

We don't yet really know as a society what a person has to do to completely and utterly cancel out a record of war heroism, but we may be about to find out. If this CBS News report [See below. –SteveB] is even close to accurate, John McCain's arguments of the last few weeks about Susan Rice are thrashingly demolished. He has, or should have, zero credibility now on this issue. It will be fascinating to see if he emerges from the holiday weekend subtly chastened, attempting to shift gears a bit, or whether he keeps the pedal to the paranoid metal. He's getting toward the sunset of what was once a reasonably distinguished career, a career (if we count his time in Vietnam) that began in the highest honor and has now descended into the darkest farce.

The CBS report found the following. It was the Office of the Director of National Intelligence that took the words "al Qaeda" and "terrorism" out of Rice's talking points for those Sept. 16 talk shows. It found also that both the CIA and the FBI approved of these edits, following standard operating procedure. The report states emphatically: "The White House or State Department did not make those changes." One source told the network's Margaret Brennan that the controversy over the word choice employed by Rice has come to the intel world as "a bit of a surprise." Another source said that there were "legitimate intelligence and legal issues to consider, as is almost always the case when explaining classified assessments publicly."

There's one bit of irony introduced to the saga by all these details, which is that this report crystallizes the fact that Rice did indeed hide some information from the public on Sept. 16—but it's the kind of information that has always been concealed from public consumption, for the kinds of national-security-related reasons that the Washington establishment has always agreed upon. Historically, of course, if any person or persons have objected to this kind of filtering, they've typically been on the left. Think Daniel Ellsberg first and foremost. The right always defended this practice, on the grounds that making possibly sensitive information public too soon without the proper running of all the intelligence traps could only provide aid and comfort to the commies or the terrorists, as the case may be.

McCain certainly comes from this school. But this, you see, was different. Different from what, and different how, are both good questions. Different from those dozen or so attacks on American embassies while George W. Bush was president? It's true that no Americans died in those raids, let alone an ambassador, and that obviously does raise the stakes. But it hardly means that our intelligence agencies should alter their procedures to meet the political demands of one party, or one senator, or one cable "news" channel. If anything, it means dramatically the opposite, and one has no trouble at all picturing, if Benghazi had happened in the heat of a presidential campaign in

which a Republican president was seeking reelection, an unctuous McCain standing before the cameras and lambasting Democrats in highly moralistic language for politicizing such a sensitive tragedy.

Well, live by the moral sword, die by it. In the same way conservatives couldn't see that Mitt Romney was going to lose because they believed only themselves and their own self-reinforcing propaganda, I think McCain probably isn't aware right now of what a joke he's becoming. He probably only goes to constituent meetings where they cheer on his desperate antics. I notice from cruising the Arizona papers that they're not really laying into him yet—just a few guarded criticisms and expressions of disappointment in the letter columns and such. Most importantly of all, establishment Washington has adored him. As long as those shields are there, he can ignore people like me and the MSNBC crowd.

But how long will they be there? McCain, because of what he endured 45 years ago, is permitted more than three strikes. But how many more? In 2008, he foisted Sarah Palin upon an unsuspecting nation. After losing that race, he then turned his back on legislating as he faced a primary challenge from his right in 2010, switching from being one of the few senators who actually took his work seriously enough to try to be a leader on compromise to becoming one of the body's chief obstructionists and windbags across a range of issues. And now, 2012, has found him slandering his country's ambassador to the United Nations on the basis of no evidence, creating circumstances that have forced U.S. intelligence agencies to defend their usually private methods in public, and of course laid the groundwork for future and wholly spurious impeachment proceedings. So this last one alone is three strikes, plus probably a couple others I'm not remembering.

Just as conservatives couldn't see that Romney was losing because they believed their own propaganda, I think McCain probably isn't aware right now of what a joke he's become.

McCain is maybe entitled to four or five strikes. But not six or seven. Will he stand down now from this embarrassing crusade? A McCain of a few years ago might have been capable of acknowledging error and saying that if Rice is nominated to be secretary of state, he is now prepared to confirm her, provided she addresses certain concerns to his satisfaction at her hearings. Can today's McCain do any such thing?

And will tomorrow's McCain go back to endorsing bipartisan immigration reform? With Republicans rushing to adopt this position, one would think that it would be a natural for McCain—to become, as he was in 2005, the lead Republican on any such legislation. But is he even interested in that anymore? Once you've hopped on the Crooked Talk Express, detraining isn't easy.

"Office of the DNI Cut "al Qaeda" Reference from Benghazi Talking Points, and CIA, FBI Signed Off" by CBS News

Nov. 20, 2012, (http://www.cbsnews.com/8301-505263_162-57552328/sources-office-of-the-dni-cut-al-qaeda-reference-from-benghazi-talking-points-and-cia-fbi-signed-off/)

(WASHINGTON) CBS News has learned that the Office of the Director of National Intelligence (DNI) cut specific references to "al Qaeda" and "terrorism" from the unclassified talking points given to Ambassador Susan Rice on the Benghazi consulate attack - with the agreement of the CIA and FBI. The White House or State Department did not make those changes.

There has been considerable discussion about who made the changes to the talking points that Rice stuck to in her television appearances on Sept. 16 (video), five days after the attack that killed American Ambassador to Libya Chris Stevens, and three other U.S. nationals.

Republicans have accused her of making misleading statements by referring to the assault as a "spontaneous" demonstration by extremists. Some have suggested she used the terminology she did for political reasons.

However, an intelligence source tells CBS News correspondent Margaret Brennan the links to al Qaeda were deemed too "tenuous" to make public, because there was not strong confidence in the person providing the intelligence. CIA Director David Petraeus, however, told Congress he agreed to release the information -- the reference to al Qaeda -- in an early draft of the talking points, which were also distributed to select lawmakers.

"The intelligence community assessed from the very beginning that what happened in Benghazi was a terrorist attack." DNI spokesman Shawn Turner tells CBS News. That information was shared at a classified level -- which Rice, as a member of President Obama's cabinet, would have been privy to.

An intelligence source says the talking points were passed from the CIA to the DNI, where the substantive edits were made, and then to FBI, which made more edits as part of "standard procedure."

The head of the DNI is James Clapper, an Obama appointee. He ultimately did review the points, before they were given to Ambassador Rice and members of the House intelligence committee on Sept. 14. They were compiled the day before.

Brennan says her source wouldn't confirm who in the agency suggested the final edits which were signed off on by all intelligence agencies.

Another source, a senior U.S. official familiar with the drafting of the talking points, tells CBS News the "controversy this word choice has caused came as a surprise."

"The points were not, as has been insinuated by some, edited to minimize the role of extremists, diminish terrorist affiliations, or play down that this was an attack," the official tells CBS News, adding that there were "legitimate intelligence and legal issues to consider, as is almost always the case when explaining classified assessments publicly."

"Most people understand that saying 'extremists' were involved in a direct assault on the mission isn't shying away from the idea of terrorist involvement," added the official. "Because of the various elements involved in the attack, the term extremist was meant to capture the range of participants."

A spokeswoman for House Intelligence Committee chairman Mike Rogers suggested today that the DNI's explanation is different that what the committee was told behind closed doors last week.

"The statement released Monday evening by the DNI's spokesman regarding how the Intelligence Community's talking points were changed gives a new explanation that differs significantly from information provided in testimony to the Committee last week," House Intelligence Committee spokeswoman Susan Phalen told CBS News. "Chairman Rogers looks forward to discussing this new explanation with Director Clapper as soon as possible to understand how the DNI reached this conclusion and why leaders of the Intelligence Community testified late last week that they were unaware of who changed the talking points."

Several militant groups have been eyed as likely culprits, including the Islamic extremist militia Ansar al Sharia, which was based in Eastern Libya and enjoyed huge power in Benghazi before the attack. Gen. Carter Ham, chief of the U.S. Africa Command, said recently that there were "linkages" between al Qaeda and some of the people who attacked the consulate and the CIA annex about a mile away.

CBS News senior correspondent John Miller, himself a former Deputy Director of the DNI's analysis division, explained on "CBS This Morning" in the weeks after the Benghazi attack why it has been so difficult for American intelligence agents to clearly identify and label the suspects in the assault.

"We want a wiring diagram," Miller said. "We want an organized picture: 'It was al Qaeda who ordered it, it was Ansar al Sharia who carried it out, it was this group that assisted. The problem is, the lines have blurred between those groups and their members. Ansar al Sharias are popping up in places like Benghazi, but also in Yemen, also in Tunisia, in all these countries -- and they're not al Qaeda, but they are reading from the al Qaeda narrative and they are being influenced by people who are formerly influential extremists in al Qaeda."

"The actual truth is, the picture isn't that clear, but we can piece it together, and that's not satisfying to people who are used to saying, 'You can attach this attack to that group,'" said Miller.

No surprise here...

"Republicans Face Unexpected Challenges in Coastal South Amid Shrinking White Vote" by Douglas A. Blackmon, *The Washington Post*

Nov. 24. 2012, (http://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/republicans-face-unexpected-challenges-in-coastal-south-amid-shrinking-white-vote/2012/11/23/02cbda58-336a-11e2-bb9b-288a310849ee_story.html)

(OXFORD, Miss.) Late on election night, a small melee erupted at the University of Mississippi here when a group of white students frustrated by the reelection of President Obama marched outside and began shouting racial slurs at African American students. Several hundred people gathered to watch as two white students were arrested.

"Mississippi still has a lot of work to do in race relations," said Kimbrelly Dandridge, an African American Obama supporter and president of the student body.

Yet even as that incident evoked ugly memories of an earlier era, Election Day in the South told a newer and more surprising story: The nation's first black president finished more strongly in the region than any other Democratic nominee in three decades, underscoring a fresh challenge for Republicans who rely on Southern whites as their base of national support.

Obama won Virginia and Florida and narrowly missed victory in North Carolina. But he also polled as well in Georgia as any Democrat since Jimmy Carter, grabbed 44 percent of the vote in deep-red South Carolina and just under that in Mississippi — despite doing no substantive campaigning in any of those states.

Much of the post-election analysis has focused on the demographic crisis facing Republicans among Hispanic voters, particularly in Texas. But the results across other parts of the South, where Latinos remain a single-digit minority, point to separate trends among blacks and whites that may also have big implications for the GOP's future.

The results show a region cleaving apart along new electoral fault lines. In the region's center, clustered along the Mississippi River — where Bill Clinton polled most strongly — the GOP remains largely unchallenged and the voting divide between blacks and whites is deepening. Nearly nine of 10 of white voters in Mississippi, for instance, went for Republican nominee Mitt Romney this year, according to exit polls. About 96 percent of black voters in the state supported Obama.

The pattern is markedly different in the five states that hug the Atlantic coast from Virginia to Florida, which together hold 82 of the South's 160 electoral votes. A combination of a growing black population, urban expansion, oceanfront development and in-migration from other regions has opened up increasing opportunities for Democrats in those states.

"Georgia is an achievable target for Democrats in 2016," said Atlanta Mayor Kasim Reed, a frequent Obama surrogate during the campaign. "What you're going to see is the Democratic Party making a drive through the geography from Virginia to Florida."

That will be easier said than done — particularly when the Democratic nominee is not Obama — but powerful forces in the region are clearly eroding GOP dominance. The trends pose difficulties for a Republican Party that has been shifting toward Dixie since the "Southern strategy" of the Nixon era, which sought to encourage white flight from the Democratic Party.

In every Southern state except Louisiana, the population of African Americans grew substantially faster than that of whites over the past decade. The growth is fueled by black retirees from the north and rising numbers of young, well-educated blacks in prosperous cities such as Atlanta, Norfolk, Charlotte and Charleston, S.C.

The influx also includes fast-growing, but smaller, Hispanic populations and an infusion of less-conservative outsiders attracted to popular coastal areas. Together, the shifts are making the electoral landscape from Virginia and the Carolinas look increasingly like the swing state of Florida.

Obama's 2012 numbers in the Southeastern coastal states outperformed every Democratic nominee since Carter and significantly narrowed past gaps between Democratic and Republican candidates. The lone possible exception is Georgia in 1996, which gave Arkansas native Bill Clinton 45.8 percent in 1996; Obama fell 0.4 percent short of that mark in tentative 2012 results, but ongoing revisions could close the gap.

The proportion of white voters in the South is also shrinking. Southern whites voted overwhelmingly for Romney, but in six Southern states, far fewer of them appear to have gone to the polls on Nov. 6 than the number who voted for Sen. John McCain (R-Ariz.) in 2008.

In Florida, the share of votes cast by whites this year fell to 66 percent, down from 73 percent in 2000. In Georgia, the number of white voters declined while African American registration increased nearly 6 percent and Hispanic voters grew by 36 percent.

"Republicans can focus all they want on Hispanics," said John Anzalone, a Montgomery, Ala., pollster who helped analyze swing states for the Obama campaign. "But they also have a problem with whites, in this election cycle, just showing up."

Many Republican leaders in the South say the lower turnout by whites in some areas simply reflected lower enthusiasm for Romney as a candidate, and doesn't signal a longer term decline in GOP strength.

Prominent conservatives in the region are acutely aware of the danger posed by the trends. "We've got to go out and sell our ideas not just to the choir, but the whole church," said Henry Barbour, a Republican National Committee member from Mississippi and a top Romney fundraiser (and nephew of former governor Haley Barbour). "We're not going to get 25 percent of the black vote in four years, but we've got to figure out which African Americans share our core beliefs."

Some Republicans had hoped to make at least small inroads among black voters in 2012 given lower African American turnout in the 2010 midterms, high black unemployment and the modest success of presidential candidate Herman Cain in the Republican primaries. They reasoned that winning over just a small percentage of black voters in key states such as Virginia, North Carolina and Florida could alter the outcome of the race.

The Rev. C.L. Bryant, an African American tea party activist from DeSoto Parish, La., helped lead a spirited effort by some of the most conservative GOP-aligned groups to use Obama's support for gay marriage as an opening to appeal to socially conservative black voters.

He produced a feature-length film titled *Runaway Slave* that urged blacks to flee the Democratic Party. It was shown in more than 20 cities, while he and other conservative African Americans toured the country to blast Obama's support for abortion rights and gay issues.

But the issues had little apparent impact on Obama's support within the black community. Black pastors — some of whom had preached against gay marriage in the past — rallied to the president. Romney also hit a number of sour notes with minorities during the campaign, including his apparent suggestion that blacks who support Obama want "more free stuff" from government.

"Romney was real disrespectful," said Rodney Collier, 58, a black stylist at Haywood's Hair Images in Richmond. "How can you be so negative and nasty to a sitting president?"

By the closing stage of the campaign, gay marriage had largely disappeared from the conversation among black voters. "We don't see any of that," said Tiara Moore, 23, a biology student, after a day of canvassing before the election at historically black Hampton University in Virginia. "They talk about health care and student loans."

Contrary to the expectations of many Republican pollsters, black voters came out in droves on Election Day and voted overwhelmingly for Obama — near or above 95 percent in most parts of the South.

"We were all basically stunned at the results," Bryant said. "It is very clear that the direction of the Republican Party — the conservative movement — is necessarily going to have to include the changing face of America and address the concerns of minorities, blacks, Latinos, and even younger white women, all young people.... It has to happen or we're going to be insignificant."

(Danielle Fisher contributed to this report.)

20121125-05	17:37	SteveG	"The Rights of Voters Got a Lot of Attention in '12 -- Here Are 10 Things We Learned"
-----------------------------	-------	--------	---

"The Rights of Voters Got a Lot of Attention in '12 -- Here Are 10 Things We Learned" by Brentin Mock, AlterNet/Colorlines

Nov. 24, 2012, (<http://www.alternet.org/news-amp-politics/rights-voters-got-lot-attention-12-here-are-10-things-we-learned>)

(Reprinted with permission of Colorlines.com. For more news from a racial justice perspective, sign up to receive weekly at Colorlines Direct.)

(Not since 1965 have the rights of voters gotten so much attention.)

A little over a week after the presidential election has ended, many voting rights watchers are reflecting on all that we learned through this year's campaigns: what went right, what went wrong, and the unresolved challenges that remain ahead. As for the overall takeaway, Advancement Project director Judith Browne-Dianis wraps it up nicely, saying, "The national conversation around voting rights was amplified like we haven't seen since 1965."

This year, more Americans arguably learned more about the voting process than any year in recent memory. Civil rights and election protection campaigns made people aware of things like the difference between a poll watcher and a poll observer; how people use data to purge voters; and what voters' general rights are while standing in poll lines. On a more nuanced level, the discussion around voter ID laws gave Americans a greater understanding of not only how many people don't have government-issued ID, but also the reasons why.

Probably most importantly, though, many Americans learned—or at least were reminded—about the history of our democracy, of how civil rights heroes helped the nation realize that democracy, by forcing an expansion of the electorate, which at core is an expansion of citizenship. "Americans began to recognize that democracy was under assault," says Browne-Dianis of the past year. "And rather than concede to this partisan effort to restrict their vote as an insurmountable setback, they saw it as a challenge to be met."

The effort to meet that challenge produced both victories and some remaining battles, but there are some specific lessons we can take away from each.

1. Data helps win elections, but it's not everything.

The Obama campaign has well demonstrated how to identify and target new voters, while the Romney campaign has learned that data, like science, is actually necessary. But data only takes get-out-the-vote efforts so far, because someone has to actually get people to the polls. Black churches and NAACP chapters in Ohio and Florida turned out record-high black voters through their "Souls to the Polls" campaigns, by shuttling and busing people straight from church services to voting booths. These campaigns, which were enormously successful in 2008 as well, have been a primary target of those who insist, beyond all proof to the contrary, that voter fraud is a problem. Defending them—or, the early voting rules that enable them—proved crucial in 2012 to increasing the number of black people who participate in democracy.

Meanwhile, sometimes the data just failed to identify voters of color in the first place. In Minnesota, Hana Worku of Voices for Voting Rights told Colorlines that most of the voters they made contact with were not people circulating in voter databanks. Rather, they reached “voters in low-income and communities of color that would not have been contacted otherwise.” In Tampa, I spent time doing “Knock n’ Grabs”—going door-to-door asking people if they’ve voted, and if not, taking them to the polls—with NAACP organizers. They ended up shedding their canvassing lists and instead cruising the streets literally picking up voters off of stoops, porches and corners because they knew the people on the data sheets likely weren’t home.

2. Voters of color were invisible, to their advantage.

In some ways, the fact that voters of color weren’t turning up in databases was a good thing. It kept people who may not have had their best interests in mind from targeting them, while throwing off Republican pollsters who thought they had the election in the bag. Campaign aides to Mitt Romney have said their calculations about possibly winning Florida were thrown off because “they saw voters they never even knew existed turn out in places like Osceola, Fla.,” which is predominantly Puerto Rican, Latino and African American. In Maine, there was massive black voter turnout, but according to the Republican Party chair: “Nobody in town knew them.”

3. The need for early voting was evident.

Among the 2012 election’s legacies will be photos of long lines at polling locations across the nation, like a reprised version of “Eyes on the Prize.” It didn’t need to be that way. Proper targeting of resources and voting machines could have streamlined voting. In Tampa, the lines held up because there were 11 constitutional amendments on the ballots, some of which voters said were indecipherable. Long lines ruled the day in Virginia, Ohio, Pennsylvania and Maryland as well. Our community journalist Hermelinda Cortes reported about how the lack of early and absentee voting opportunities hurt Virginia. Wrote Cortes: “The state doesn’t make it easy to vote early. Unlike other states, Virginia demands that early voters meet one of more than a dozen qualifications and sign a sworn statement.”

In Florida, election law expert Dan Smith studied the early voting cutbacks from this year and concluded, “It appears that fewer days of early voting—especially the elimination of the final Sunday prior to Election Day—have led to fewer opportunities for some voters to turn out to vote. Moreover, it is certainly arguable based on the evidence presented here that the reduction of early voting days caused by House Bill 1355 has had a differential effect on racial and ethnic minorities in Florida, specifically blacks.”

4. Right wing poll watchers played themselves.

Our Voting Rights Watch project sounded the alarm early on about the plans of poll-watching groups like True the Vote. Earlier this year, True the Vote said it would have an army of a million people to make voters feel like they were “driving and seeing the police follow” them. The Republican Party also launched efforts to marshal a massive poll watcher showing. But most of these efforts were deflated, mainly because media outlets and voting rights advocates put them on blast and thus drew close scrutiny. But they were also undone through their own incompetence.

Our reporter Aura Bogado, for instance, caught one poll watcher in Colorado reporting “high concentrations of people of color” in a voting location, as if that was against the law. In Ohio, poll watchers from True the Vote were banned from one county’s precincts because they didn’t register properly. In general, True the Vote aligned itself with so many right wing extremists and racists that their non-partisan claims were rendered pure folly. Meanwhile, poll watcher manuals from both True the Vote and the Republican Party showed false information. All of this significantly undermined their relationships with election officials and their credibility in the eyes of the news media.

5. Election Protection works.

Some people are saying that pre-election voter suppression threats were overhyped. Maybe. Or maybe there was enough of a counter-movement through Election Protection lawyers who were on the scene in

such bulk that their presence thwarted voter harassment, or fended it off when it appeared. I personally saw Election Protection lawyers intervene when poll watchers got rambunctious, while also helping older people get through long lines and mitigate voter confusion, which was prevalent. Our community journalist Hillary Abe wrote about how one team not only helped deflect voter suppression efforts targeting Native Americans, but also how they mobilized this year to expand their political power, fighting off voter ID proposals in the process.

6. Grassroots organizers can turn out voters on shoestring budgets—but that’s not a good thing.

In Orlando, Miami and Tampa, I spent time with get-out-the-vote advocates who were working on the flimsiest of budgets, if they had budgets at all. Many of the organizers were themselves unemployed and doing volunteer work. I learned that this was also true elsewhere. In Minnesota, Hana Worku tells us that “organizers in communities of color were scrambling just to find materials, translation, and funding to pay for their work, even part-time.” In Pittsburgh, organizer Celeste Taylor was somewhat positive about it, telling me, “It is so important to understand that the success of nonprofits, nonpartisan and effective community based organizing work is that they utilize a lot of volunteers, which includes folks like myself who were being paid for part-time work and worked nearly all the time—many 12-to-18 hour days! It was a huge sacrifice to earn so little and work so much, but the payoff was seeing how the people in our communities appreciated the information and turned out to vote!” True, but there’s no reason why putting in 60-plus hours of work shouldn’t be adequately compensated. If it’s bad for Wal-Mart, it’s bad for voter work.

7. People of color were self-motivated to vote, not just motivated by Obama.

As I wrote previously, people didn’t wait hours in line just to vote in the guy known for deporting the most immigrants or failing to make a dent in black unemployment. There was a deeper dedication at play. Our community journalist Noni Grant said that while in the field she asked several people why they felt it was important to vote. The overwhelming response was “black folks have fought and died for the right to vote.” The history of civil rights and voting rights in America is still within the active memory of many people of color, and so this was a civic-duty calling, especially in the face of such a vocal and overt suppression effort.

8. A lot of people didn’t vote, because they couldn’t, because of felonies.

In Florida and Virginia alone, felony disenfranchisement kept almost two million people from voting this November. And even though the process in Virginia for restoring rights to those with felonies was streamlined by the governor, it is still cumbersome enough that many weren’t able to apply for rights restoration in time. Rosana Cruz, of New Orleans-based Voices Of The Ex-offender wrote about this problem saying, “Nearly half a million people in the five Gulf states didn’t vote today, because as formerly incarcerated people, people on probation and parole, or currently incarcerated people, they’ve been denied that right. That number doesn’t count the Formerly Incarcerated People who don’t even know if they have the right to vote, because the laws blocking voting rights vary from state to state.”

9. Hundreds of thousands of votes still haven’t been counted.

In Arizona, Florida and Pennsylvania, there are still outstanding ballots to be counted. Many voters in these states got to the polls only to find that their names were not listed, even though they were certainly registered. In Arizona, hundreds of thousands of people are wondering where their registration, or their vote went. In Philadelphia, it’s the same deal. Philadelphia City Paper has attempted to get to the bottom of what happened to the disappearing votes, and was not able to come up with anything. Like President Obama said, “We have to fix that.”

10. Gerrymandering and redistricting caused confusion.

This is probably the most under-reported story in the country. Following the 2010 Census, new voting district lines were drawn, which changed where many people go to vote. If you’ve moved since the Census came out, then there’s even more room for confusion. In Philadelphia, a lot of the mysterious vanishing

voters are suspected to be a result of newly drawn lines and a failure by county commissioners to alert voters of their new voting districts.

Trupania Bonner, of Moving Forward Gulf Coast, Inc., was able to get communities in Louisiana not only educated about the redistricting process, but also taught them how to get involved in it. Says Bonner: "No one really understands what redistricting is, and how when gerrymandering occurs you see how the Southern Manifesto and those types of ideologies progress from that. So for us, we learned the process of redistricting and then also how to draw districts ourselves. We then bought the software used by legislators to do redistricting, and taught residents how to do it too. What all communities need to fully understand is how our rights are protected by learning and engaging in the census and redistricting process."

20121125-06 17:42 SteveG "Party of Entitled Rich Threatens Economy"

"Party of Entitled Rich Threatens Economy" by Leo Gerard, Truthout

Nov. 24, 2012, (<http://truth-out.org/opinion/item/12926-party-of-entitled-rich-threatens-economy>)

Republicans, the party of the nation's entitled rich, are holding a knife to the throat of America's frail recovery.

The GOP sore losers have America up against a wall. Republicans don't care that the majority of the country voted for a candidate who promised to raise taxes on the rich. Republicans don't care that an even larger majority – 60 percent – told election day pollsters they wanted those taxes raised. Republicans don't care about majority-rule democracy at all. They're demanding ransom – extension of tax cuts for the rich. If Americans don't submit, Republicans will slash the nation's economy.

"Back away from your Social Security, your Medicare, your Medicaid," the Republicans are ordering. The GOP insists those crucial social insurance programs be sacrificed to prevent the entitled rich from once again paying the income tax rates that they did during the boom years of Bill Clinton. The party that lost the Presidency, lost seats in the House and lost seats in the Senate is willing to take down the economy, to eviscerate programs like the Federal Emergency Management Agency, the Consumer Product Safety Commission and the Federal Aviation Administration rather than require the entitled rich pull their weight as citizens of the country that enabled them to live lives of unprecedented luxury.

The candidate Republicans chose as their presidential nominee, Mitt Romney, stated the party's position loud and clear last spring and reiterated it during a phone call last week with his millionaire financiers. Romney told funders in May that he had no intention of "worrying about" 47 percent of Americans who he described as moochers, citizens he slandered with the allegation that they refuse to "take personal responsibility."

In the phone call last week, Romney claimed that the Americans he referred to as government moochers all voted for President Obama because the Democrat gave them "gifts." Romney, a quarter-billionaire, described the administration's plan for partial forgiveness of college loan interest as a "gift" to students. The Republican candidate born into wealth and pampered in private schools characterized as a "gift" the requirement in Obamacare that health insurance companies provide prescription contraceptives without co-payments.

The rich boy said President Obama bought women's votes for \$10 co-pay forgiveness. But for Republicans, it's never the other way around. Romney and the GOP don't think they were buying the votes of the rich with their promise to add another 20 percent break on top of the Bush tax cuts for the wealthiest.

That's because they believe they're entitled. They derisively refer to the social safety net programs that prevent the nation's poor and elderly from being reduced to eating cat food as "entitlements." But it's the entitled rich – Romney, the Koch Brothers, Sheldon Adelson and their ilk – who demand that America give them "stuff" like tax breaks for sending jobs overseas, like tax loopholes for hoarding their assets in the Caymans, like government-paid roads and sewers and rail lines to their businesses.

The entitled rich and their political party don't seem to get the fact that they lost the election. Eighty CEOs have ponied up \$37 million to make sure the so-called fiscal cliff problem is resolved their way. They're saying, basically, they're willing to give up one of the "couple of Cadillacs" they drive if the middle class just accepts cat food as its meat course. The CEOs, calling themselves the "Fix the Debt" coalition, claim they'll pay a secret amount more in taxes if the 99 percent suffers cuts to its social safety net and endures slashed government programs.

Republicans in Congress won't even go that far. Their legislation would give more to the rich and less to everyone else. They've proposed, for example, extending the estate tax cuts that benefit the richest 0.3 percent of American families when their millionaire relatives die, an estimated 7,000 people in 2013. At the same time, Republicans are demanding an end to child tax credit and earned income tax credit enhancements that help 13 million families get by, families that include 26 million children. Those 7,000 entitled rich people and their Republican representatives believe 26 million kids can always join the grandmas dining on cat food. Tastes like chicken, right?

Congress and the President are confronted with a deadline in these hostage negotiations. On Jan. 1, half a trillion in tax increases and across-the-board spending cuts are scheduled to take effect for the remainder of fiscal year 2013. It's called the fiscal cliff because many economists believe the combined effect during a weak recovery would shove the economy back down into recession.

Democrats don't want to risk damaging the economy. They've proposed extending the tax cuts for the 98 percent right now. The richest two percent would benefit from these breaks as well, receiving them on the first \$250,000 of their earnings. Everybody gets something. This proposal passed the Democratic-controlled Senate. The Republican-controlled House refuses to even vote on it.

Republicans aren't talking about extending tax breaks for the 98 percent. Instead, they're threatening the economic life of the country if they don't get what they want – tax breaks for people who don't need them. Law enforcement experts discourage paying off blackmailers and kidnappers.

President Obama is right to take that advice and refuse to pay the ransom Republicans are demanding to appease the entitled rich.



<http://www.exploregeorgia.org/TheGeorgiaCoast>



—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